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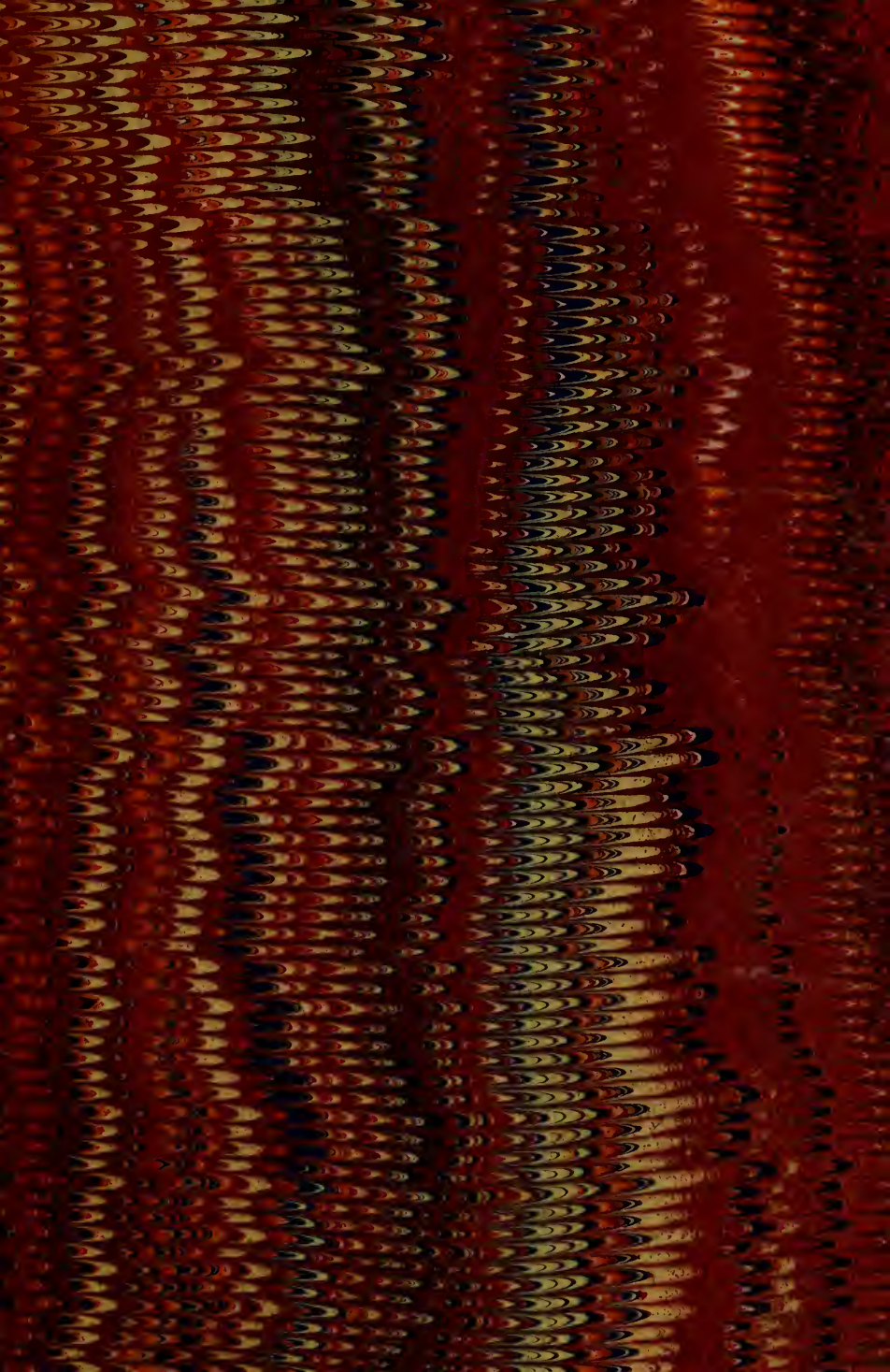

Pickwick Papers.

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WORKS

OF

CHARLES DICKENS.

HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS BY F. O. C. DARLEY AND JOHN GILBERT.

THE PICKWICK PAPERS.

VOL. IV.

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THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS

OF

THE PICKWICK CLUB.

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POSTHUMOUS PAPERS

OF

THE PICKWICK CLUB.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SHOWING HOW MR. SAMUEL WELLER GOT INTO DIFFICULTIES.

In a lofty room, badly lighted and worse ventilated, situate in Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn-fields, there sit nearly the whole year round, one, two, three, or four gentlemen in wigs, as the case may be, with little writing-desks before them, constructed after the fashion of those used by the judges of the land, barring the French polish. There is a box of barristers on their right hand; there is an enclosure of insolvent debtors on their left; and there is an inclined plane of most especially dirty faces in their front. These gentlemen are the Commissioners of the Insolvent Court, and the place in which they sit, is the Insolvent Court itself.

It is, and has been, time out of mind, the remarkable fate of this Court to be, somehow or other, held and understood, by the general consent of all the destitute shabby-genteel people in London, as their common resort, and place of daily refuge. It is always full. The steams of beer and spirits perpetually ascend to the ceil-

ing, and, being condensed by the heat, roll down the walls like rain; there are more old suits of clothes in it at one time, than will be offered for sale in all Houndsditch in a twelvemonth; more unwashed skins and grizzly beards than all the pumps and shaving-shops between Tyburn and Whitechapel could render decent, between sunrise and sunset.

It must not be supposed that any of these people have the least shadow of business in, or the remotest connection with, the place they so indefatigably attend. If they had, it would be no matter of surprise, and the singularity of the thing would cease at once. Some of them sleep during the greater part of the sitting; others carry small portable dinners wrapped in pocket-handkerchiefs or sticking out of their worn-out pockets, and munch and listen with equal relish; but no one among them was ever known to have the slightest personal interest in any case that was ever brought forward. Whatever they do, there they sit from the first moment to the last. When it is heavy rainy weather, they all come in, wet through, and at such times the vapors of the Court are like those of a fungus-pit.

A casual visitor might suppose this place to be a Temple dedicated to the Genius of Seediness. There is not a messenger or process-server attached to it, who wears a coat that was made for him; not a tolerably fresh, or wholesome-looking man in the whole establishment, except a little white-headed, apple-faced tipstaff, and even he, like an ill-conditioned cherry preserved in brandy, seems to have artificially dried and withered up, into a state of preservation, to which he can lay no natural claim. The very barristers' wigs are ill-powdered, and their curls lack crispness.

But the attorneys, who sit at a large bare table below the Commissioners, are, after all, the greatest curiosities. The professional establishment of the more opulent of these gentlemen, consists of a blue bag and a boy: generally a youth of the Jewish persuasion. They have no fixed offices: their legal business being transacted in the parlors of public-houses, or the yards of prisons: whither they repair in crowds, and canvass for customers after the manner of omnibus cads. They are of a greasy and mildewed appearance; and if they can be said to have any vices at all, perhaps drinking and cheating are the most conspicuous among them. Their residences are usually on the outskirts of "the Rules," chiefly lying within a circle of one mile from the obelisk in St. George's Fields. Their looks are not prepossessing, and their manners are peculiar.

Mr. Solomon Pell, one of this learned body, was a fat, flabby, pale man, in a surtout which looked green one minute, and brown the next: with a velvet collar of the same chameleon tints. His forehead was narrow, his face wide, his head large, and his nose all on one side, as if Nature, indignant with the propensities she observed in him in his birth, had given it an angry tweak which it had never recovered. Being short-necked and asthmatic, however, he respired principally through this feature; so, perhaps, what it wanted in ornament, it made up in usefulness.

"I'm sure to bring him through it," said Mr. Pell.

"Are you though?" replied the person to whom the assurance was pledged.

"Certain sure," replied Pell; "but if he'd gone to any irregular practitioner, mind you, I wouldn't have answered for the consequences."

"Ah!" said the other, with open mouth.

"No, that I wouldn't," said Mr. Pell; and he pursed up his lips, frowned, and shook his head mysteriously.

Now, the place where this discourse occurred, was the public-house just opposite to the Insolvent Court; and the person with whom it was held, was no other than the elder Mr. Weller, who had come there, to comfort and console a friend, whose petition to be discharged under the act, was to be that day heard, and whose attorney he was at that moment consulting.

"And vere is George?" inquired the old gentleman.

Mr. Pell jerked his head in the direction of a back-parlor: whither Mr. Weller at once repairing, was immediately greeted in the warmest and most flattering manner by some half-dozen of his professional brethren, in token of their gratification at his arrival. The insolvent gentleman, who had contracted a speculative but imprudent passion for horsing long stages, which had led to his present embarrassments, looked extremely well, and was soothing the excitement of his feelings with shrimps and porter.

The salutation between Mr. Weller and his friends was strictly confined to the freemasonry of the craft; consisting of a jerking round of the right wrist, and a tossing of the little finger into the air at the same time. We once knew two famous coachmen (they are dead now, poor fellows) who were twins, and between whom an unaffected and devoted attachment existed. They passed each other on the Dover road every day for twenty-four years, never exchanging any other greeting than this; and yet, when one died, the other pined away, and soon afterwards followed him!

"Vell, George," said Mr. Weller, senior, taking off

his upper coat, and seating himself with his accustomed gravity. "How is it? All right behind, and full inside?"

"All right, old feller," replied the embarrassed gentleman.

"Is the gray mare made over to anybody?" inquired Mr. Weller anxiously.

George nodded in the affirmative.

"Vell, that's all right," said Mr. Weller. "Coach taken care on, also?"

"Con-signed in a safe quarter," replied George, wringing the heads off half-a-dozen shrimps, and swallowing them without any more ado.

"Wery good, wery good," said Mr. Weller. "Alvays see to the drag ven you go down-hill. Is the vay-bill all clear and straight for'erd?"

"The schedule, sir," said Pell, guessing at Mr. Weller's meaning, "the schedule is as plain and satisfactory as pen and ink can make it."

Mr. Weller nodded in a manner which bespoke his inward approval of these arrangements; and then, turning to Mr. Pell, said, pointing to his friend George:

"Ven do you take his cloths off?"

"Why," replied Mr. Pell, "he stands third on the opposed list, and I should think it would be his turn in about half an hour. I told my clerk to come over and tell us when there was a chance."

Mr. Weller surveyed the attorney from head to foot with great admiration, and said, emphatically:

"And what'll you take, sir?"

"Why, really," replied Mr. Pell, "you're very ——. Upon my word and honor, I am not in the habit of——. It's so very early in the morning, that, actually, I am

almost ——. Well, you may bring me three penn'orth of rum, my dear."

The officiating damsel, who had anticipated the order before it was given, set the glass of spirits before Pell, and retired.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Pell, looking round upon the company, "Success to your friend! I don't like to boast, gentlemen; it's not my way; but I can't help saying, that, if your friend hadn't been fortunate enough to fall into hands that —— but I won't say what I was going to say. Gentlemen, my service to you." Having emptied the glass in a twinkling, Mr. Pell smacked his lips, and looked complacently round on the assembled coachmen, who evidently regarded him as a species of divinity.

"Let me see," said the legal authority — "What was I a-saying, gentlemen?"

"I think you was remarkin' as you wouldn't have no objection to another o' the same, sir," said Mr. Weller, with grave facetiousness.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Pell. "Not bad, not bad. A professional man, too! At this time of the morning, it would be rather too good a ——. Well, I don't know, my dear — you *may* do that again, if you please. Hem!"

This last sound was a solemn and dignified cough, in which Mr. Pell, observing an indecent tendency to mirth in some of his auditors, considered it due to himself to indulge.

"The late Lord Chancellor, gentlemen, was very fond of me," said Mr. Pell.

"And wery creditable in him, too," interposed Mr. Weller.

"Hear, hear," assented Mr. Pell's client. "Why shouldn't he be?"

"Ah — why, indeed!" said a very red-faced man, who had said nothing yet, and who looked extremely unlikely to say anything more. "Why shouldn't he?"

A murmur of assent ran through the company.

"I remember, gentlemen," said Mr. Pell, "dining with him on one occasion; — there was only us two, but every thing as splendid as if twenty people had been expected — the great seal on a dumb-waiter at his right hand, and a man in a bag-wig and suit of armor guarding the mace with a drawn sword and silk stockings — which is perpetually done, gentlemen, night and day; when he said, 'Pell,' he said; 'no false delicacy, Pell. You're a man of talent; you can get anybody through the Insolvent Court, Pell; and your country should be proud of you.' Those were his very words — 'My Lord,' I said, 'you flatter me.' — 'Pell,' he said, 'If I do, I'm damned.'"

"Did he say that?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"He did," replied Pell.

"Vell, then," said Mr. Weller, "I say Parliament ought to ha' took it up; and if he'd been a poor man, they *would* ha' done it."

"But, my dear friend," argued Mr. Pell, "it was in confidence."

"In what?" said Mr. Weller.

"In confidence."

"Oh! wery good," replied Mr. Weller, after a little reflection. "If he damned his-self in confidence, o' course that was another thing."

"Of course it was," said Mr. Pell. "The distinction's obvious, you will perceive."

"Alters the case entirely," said Mr. Weller. "Go on, sir."

"No; I will not go on, sir," said Mr. Pell, in a low and serious tone. "You have reminded me, sir, that this conversation was private — private and confidential, gentlemen. Gentlemen, I am a professional man. It may be that I am a good deal looked up to, in my profession — it may be that I am not. Most people know. I say nothing. Observations have already been made, in this room, injurious to the reputation of my noble friend. You will excuse me, gentlemen; I was imprudent. I feel that I have no right to mention this matter without his concurrence. Thank you, sir; thank you." Thus delivering himself, Mr. Pell thrust his hands into his pockets, and, frowning grimly around, rattled three halfpence with terrible determination.

This virtuous resolution had scarcely been formed, when the boy and the blue bag, who were inseparable companions, rushed violently into the room, and said (at least the boy did; for the blue bag took no part in the announcement) that the case was coming on directly. The intelligence was no sooner received than the whole party hurried across the street, and began to fight their way into Court — a preparatory ceremony, which has been calculated to occupy, in ordinary cases, from twenty-five minutes to thirty.

Mr. Weller, being stout, cast himself at once into the crowd, with the desperate hope of ultimately turning up in some place which would suit him. His success was not quite equal to his expectations; for having neglected to take his hat off, it was knocked over his eyes by some unseen person, upon whose toes he had alighted with considerable force. Apparently, this individual regretted

his impetuosity immediately afterwards; for, muttering an indistinct exclamation of surprise, he dragged the old man out into the hall, and, after a violent struggle, released his head and face.

"Samivel!" exclaimed Mr. Weller, when he was thus enabled to behold his rescuer.

Sam nodded.

"You're a dutiful and affectionate little boy, you are, a'n't you?" said Mr. Weller, "to come a-bonnetin' your father in his old age?"

"How should I know who you wos?" responded the son. "Do you s'pose I wos to tell you by the weight o' your foot?"

"Vell, that's wery true, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, mollified at once; "but what are you a-doin' on here? Your gov'nor can't do no good here, Sammy. They won't pass that werdick; they won't pass it, Sammy." And Mr. Weller shook his head, with legal solemnity.

"Wot a perwerse old file it is!" exclaimed Sam, "alvays a-goin' on about werdicks and alleybis, and that. Who said anything about the werdick?"

Mr. Weller made no reply, but once more shook his head most learnedly.

"Leave off rattlin' that 'ere nob o' yourn, if you don't want it to come off the springs altogether," said Sam, impatiently, "and behave reasonable. I vent all the vay down to the Markis o' Granby, arter you, last night."

"Did you see the Marchioness o' Granby, Sammy?" inquired Mr, Weller, with a sigh.

"Yes, I did," replied Sam.

"How wos the dear creetur a-lookin'?"

"Wery queer," said Sam. "I think she's a-injurin'

herself gradivally vith too much o' that 'ere pine-apple rum, and other strong medicines o' the same natur."

"You don't mean that, Sammy?" said the senior, earnestly.

"I do, indeed," replied the junior. Mr. Weller seized his son's hand, clasped it, and let it fall. There was an expression on his countenance in doing so — not of dismay or apprehension, but partaking more of the sweet and gentle character of hope. A gleam of resignation, and even of cheerfulness, passed over his face too, as he slowly said, "I a'n't quite certain, Sammy; I wouldn't like to say I wos altogether positive, in case of any subsekent disapp'intment, but I raythor think, my boy — I raythor think — that the shepherd's got the liver complaint!"

"Does he look bad?" inquired Sam.

"He's uncommon pale," replied his father, "'cept about the nose, wich is redder than ever. His appetite is wery so-so, but he imbibes wunderful."

Some thoughts of the rum appeared to obtrude themselves on Mr. Weller's mind, as he said this; for he looked gloomy and thoughtful; but he very shortly recovered, as was testified by a perfect alphabet of winks, in which he was only wont to indulge when particularly pleased.

"Vell, now," said Sam, "about my affair. Just open them ears o' yourn, and don't say nothin' till I've done." With this brief preface, Sam related, as succinctly as he could, the last memorable conversation he had had with Mr. Pickwick.

"Stop there by himself, poor creetur!" exclaimed the elder Mr. Weller, "without nobody to take his part! It can't be done, Samivel, it can't be done."

"O' course it can't," asserted Sam; "I know'd that, afore I came."

"Wy, they'll eat him up alive, Sammy," exclaimed Mr. Weller.

Sam nodded his concurrence in the opinion.

"He goes in raythor raw, Sammy," said Mr. Weller metaphorically, "and he'll come out, done so ex-ceedin' brown, that his most formiliar friends won't know him. Roast pigeon's nothin' to it, Sammy."

Again Sam Weller nodded.

"It oughtn't to be, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, gravely.

"It mus'n't be," said Sam.

"Cert'nly not," said Mr. Weller.

"Vell now," said Sam, "you've been a prophesyin' away, wery fine, like a red-faced Nixon, as the sixpenny books gives picters on."

"Who wos he, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Never mind who he wos," retorted Sam; "he warn't a coachman; that's enough for you."

"I know'd a ostler o' that name," said Mr. Weller, musing.

"It warn't him," said Sam. "This here gen'l'm'n was a prophet."

"Wot's a prophet?" inquired Mr. Weller, looking sternly on his son.

"Wy, a man as tells what's a-goin' to happen," replied Sam.

"I wish I'd know'd him, Sammy," said Mr. Weller. "P'raps he might ha' throw'd a small light on that 'ere liver complaint as we wos a-speakin' on, just now. Hows'-ever, if he's dead, and a'n't left the bis'ness to nobody, there's an end on it. Go on, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, with a sigh.

"Well," said Sam, "you've been a-prophesyin' avay, about wot 'll happen to the gov'nor if he's left alone. Don't you see any vay o' takin' care on him?"

"No, I don't, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, with a reflective visage.

"No vay at all?" inquired Sam.

"No vay," said Mr. Weller, "unless" — and a gleam of intelligence lighted up his countenance as he sunk his voice to a whisper, and applied his mouth to the ear of his offspring — "unless it is getting him out in a turn-up bedstead, unbeknown to the turnkeys, Sammy, or dressin' him up like a old 'ooman vith a green wail."

Sam Weller received both of these suggestions with unexpected contempt, and again propounded his question.

"No," said the old gentleman; "if he von't let you stop there, I see no vay at all. It's no thoroughfare, Sammy — no thoroughfare."

"Well, then, I'll tell you wot it is," said Sam, "I'll trouble you for the loan of five-and-tventy pound."

"Wot good 'ull that do?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Never mind," replied Sam. "P'raps you may ask for it, five minits artervards; p'raps I may say I von't pay, and cut up rough. You von't think o' arrestin' your own son for the money, and sendin' him off to the Fleet, will you, you unnat'ral wagabone?"

At this reply of Sam's, the father and son exchanged a complete code of telegraphic nods and gestures, after which, the elder Mr. Weller sat himself down on a stone step, and laughed till he was purple.

"Wot a old image it is!" exclaimed Sam, indignant at this loss of time. "What are you a-settin' down there for, con-wertin' your face into a street-door

knocker, wen there's so much to be done. Were's the money?"

"In the boot, Sammy, in the boot," replied Mr. Weller, composing his features. "Hold my hat, Sammy."

Having divested himself of this encumbrance, Mr. Weller gave his body a sudden wrench to one side, and, by a dexterous twist, contrived to get his right hand into a most capacious pocket, from whence, after a great deal of panting and exertion, he extricated a pocket-book of the large octavo size, fastened by a huge leathern strap. From this ledger he drew forth a couple of whip-lashes, three or four buckles, a little sample-bag of corn, and finally a small roll of very dirty bank-notes; from which he selected the required amount, which he handed over to Sam.

"And now, Sammy," said the old gentleman, when the whip-lashes, and the buckles, and the sample, had been all put back, and the book once more deposited at the bottom of the same pocket. "Now, Sammy, I know a gen'l'm'n here, as 'll do the rest of the bis'ness for us, in no time — a limb o' the law, Sammy, as has got brains like the frogs, dispersed all over his body, and reachin' to the wery tips of his fingers; a friend of the Lord Chancellorship's, Sammy, who'd only have to tell him what he wanted, and he'd lock you up for life, if that wos all."

"I say," said Sam, "none o' that."

"None o' wot?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Wy, none o' them unconstitootional ways o' doing it," retorted Sam. "The have-his-carcass, next to the perpetual motion, is vun of the blessedest things as wos ever made. I've read that 'ere in the newspapers, wery of'en."

"Well, wot's that got to do vith it?" inquired Mr Weller.

"Just this here," said Sam, "that I'll patronize the inwention, and go in, that vay. No visperin's to the Chancellorship — I don't like the notion. It mayn't be altogether safe, vith reference to the gettin' out again."

Deferring to his son's feeling upon this point, Mr. Weller at once sought the erudite Solomon Pell, and acquainted him with his desire to issue a writ, instantly, for the sum of twenty-five pounds, and costs of process: to be executed without delay upon the body of one Samuel Weller; the charges thereby incurred, to be paid in advance to Solomon Pell.

The attorney was in high glee; for the embarrassed coach-horser was ordered to be discharged forthwith. He highly approved of Sam's attachment to his master; declared that it strongly reminded him of his own feelings of devotion to his friend, the Chancellor; and at once led the elder Mr. Weller down to the Temple, to swear the affidavit of debt: which the boy, with the assistance of the blue bag, had drawn up on the spot.

Meanwhile, Sam, having been formally introduced to the whitewashed gentleman and his friends, as the offspring of Mr. Weller, of the Belle Savage, was treated with marked distinction, and invited to regale himself with them in honor of the occasion — an invitation which he was by no means backward in accepting.

The mirth of gentlemen of this class is of a grave and quiet character, usually; but the present instance was one of peculiar festivity, and they relaxed in proportion. After some rather tumultuous toasting of the Chief Commissioner and Mr. Solomon Pell, who had that day displayed such transcendent abilities, a mottle-faced gentle-

man in a blue shawl proposed that somebody should sing a song. The obvious suggestion was, that the mottle-faced gentleman, being anxious for a song, should sing it himself; but this the mottle-faced gentleman sturdily, and somewhat offensively, declined to do: upon which, as is not unusual in such cases, a rather angry colloquy ensued.

"Gentlemen," said the coach-horser, "rather than disturb the harmony of this delightful occasion, perhaps Mr. Samuel Weller will oblige the company."

"Raly, gentlemen," said Sam, "I'm not wery much in the habit o' singin' without the instrument; but anythin' for a quiet life, as the man said wen he took the sitivation at the lighthouse."

With this prelude, Mr. Samuel Weller burst at once into the following wild and beautiful legend, which, under the impression that it is not generally known, we take the liberty of quoting. We would beg to call particular attention to the monosyllable at the end of the second and fourth lines, which not only enables the singer to take breath at those points, but greatly assists the metre.

ROMANCE.

I.

Bold Turpin vunce, on Hounslow Heath,
His bold mare Bess bestrode—er
Ven there he see'd the Bishop's coach
A-coming along the road—er.
So he gallops close to the 'orse's legs,
And he claps his head vithin;
And the Bishop says, "Sure as eggs is eggs,
This here's the bold Turpin!"

CHORUS.

And the Bishop says, "Sure as eggs is eggs,
This here's the bold Turpin!"

II.

Says Turpin, "You shall eat your words,
With a sarce of leaden bul—let;"
So he puts a pistol to his mouth,
And he fires it down his gul—let.
The coachman, he not likin' the job,
Set off at a full gal-lop,
But Dick put a couple of balls in his nob,
And perwailed on him to stop.

CHORUS (*sarcastically*).

But Dick put a couple of balls in his nob,
And perwailed on him to stop.

"I maintain that that 'ere song's personal to the cloth," said the mottled-faced gentleman, interrupting it at this point. "I demand the name o' that coachman."

"Nobody know'd," replied Sam. "He hadn't got his card in his pocket."

"I object to the introduction o' politics," said the mottle-faced gentleman. "I submit that, in the present company, that 'ere song's political; and, wot's much the same, that it a'n't true. I say that that coachman did *not* run away; but that he died game — game as pheasants; and I won't hear nothin' said to the contrairey."

As the mottle-faced gentleman spoke with great energy and determination: and as the opinions of the company seemed divided on the subject: it threatened to give rise to fresh altercation, when Mr. Weller and Mr. Pell most opportunely arrived.

"All right, Sammy," said Mr. Weller.

"The officer will be here at four o'clock," said Mr. Pell. "I suppose you won't run away meanwhile — eh? Ha! ha!"

"P'raps my cruel pa 'ull relent afore then," replied Sam, with a broad grin.

"Not I," said the elder Mr. Weller.

"Do," said Sam.

"Not on no account," replied the inexorable creditor.

"I ll give bills for the amount, at sixpence a month," said Sam.

"I won't take 'em," said Mr. Weller.

"Ha, ha, ha! very good, very good," said Mr. Solomon Pell, who was making out his little bill of costs; "a very amusing incident indeed! Benjamin, copy that," and Mr. Pell smiled again, as he called Mr. Weller's attention to the amount.

"Thank you, thank you," said the professional gentleman, taking up another of the greasy notes as Mr. Weller took it from the pocket-book. "Three ten and one ten is five. Much obliged to you, Mr. Weller. Your son is a most deserving young man, very much so indeed, sir. It's a very pleasant trait in a young man's character — very much so," added Mr. Pell, smiling smoothly round, as he buttoned up the money.

"Wot a game it is!" said the elder Mr. Weller, with a chuckle. "A reg'lar prodigy son!"

"Prodigal — prodigal son, sir," suggested Mr. Pell, mildly.

"Never mind, sir," said Mr. Weller, with dignity. "I know wot's o'clock, sir. Wen I don't, I'll ask you, sir."

By the time the officer arrived, Sam had made himself so extremely popular, that the congregated gentlemen determined to see him to prison in a body. So, off they set; the plaintiff and defendant walking arm-in-arm; the officer in front; and eight stout coachmen bringing up the rear. At Sergeant's Inn Coffee-

house the whole party halted to refresh; and, the legal arrangements being completed, the procession moved on again.

Some little commotion was occasioned in Fleet Street, by the pleasantry of the eight gentlemen in the flank, who persevered in walking four abreast; it was also found necessary to leave the mottle-faced gentleman behind, to fight a ticket-porter: it being arranged that his friends should call for him as they came back. Nothing but these little incidents occurred on the way. When they reached the gate of the Fleet, the cavalcade, taking the time from the plaintiff, gave three tremendous cheers for the defendant; and, after having shaken hands all round, left him.

Sam, having been formally delivered into the warden's custody: to the intense astonishment of Roker, and to the evident emotion of even the phlegmatic Neddy: passed at once into the prison, walked straight to his master's room, and knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam appeared, pulled off his hat, and smiled.

"Ah, Sam, my good lad," said Mr. Pickwick, evidently delighted to see his humble friend again; "I had no intention of hurting your feelings yesterday, my faithful fellow, by what I said. Put down your hat, Sam, and let me explain my meaning, a little more at length."

"Won't presently do, sir?" inquired Sam.

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick; "but why not now?"

"I'd raythe not now, sir," rejoined Sam.

"Why?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"'Cause" — said Sam, hesitating.

"Because of what?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, alarmed at his follower's manner. "Speak out, Sam."

"'Cause," rejoined Sam; "'cause I've got a little bis'-ness as I want to do."

"What business?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, surprised at Sam's confused manner.

"Nothin' partickler, sir," replied Sam.

"Oh, if it's nothing particular," said Mr. Pickwick with a smile, "you can speak with me first."

"I think I'd better see arter it at once," said Sam, still hesitating.

Mr. Pickwick looked amazed, but said nothing.

"The fact is" —— said Sam, stopping short.

"Well!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Speak out, Sam."

"Why, the fact is," said Sam, with a desperate effort, "P'raps I'd better see arter my bed afore I do anythin' else."

"*Your bed!*" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, in astonishment.

"Yes, my bed, sir," replied Sam. "I'm a pris'ner. I was arrested, this here wery arternoon, for debt."

"You arrested for debt!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, sinking into a chair.

"Yes, for debt, sir," replied Sam; "and the man as put me in, 'ull never let me out, till you go yourself."

"Bless my heart and soul!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick. "What do you mean?"

"Wot I say, sir," rejoined Sam. "If it's forty year to come, I shall be a pris'ner, and I'm very glad on it; and if it had been Newgate, it would ha' been just the same. Now the murder's out, and, dam'me, there's an end on it!"

With these words, which he repeated with great emphasis and violence, Sam Weller dashed his hat upon the ground, in a most unusual state of excitement; and then, folding his arms, looked firmly and fixedly in his master's face.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TREATS OF DIVERS LITTLE MATTERS WHICH OCCURRED IN THE FLEET, AND OF MR. WINKLE'S MYSTERIOUS BEHAVIOR; AND SHOWS HOW THE POOR CHANCERY PRISONER OBTAINED HIS RELEASE AT LAST.

Mr. Pickwick felt a great deal too much touched by the warmth of Sam's attachment, to be able to exhibit any manifestation of anger or displeasure at the precipitate course he had adopted, in voluntarily consigning himself to a debtors' prison, for an indefinite period. The only point on which he persevered in demanding any explanation, was, the name of Sam's detaining creditor, but this Mr. Weller as perseveringly withheld.

"It a'n't o' no use, sir," said Sam, again and again. "He's a ma-licious, bad-disposed, vorldly-minded, spiteful, windictive creetur, with a hard heart as there a'n't no soft'nin': as the wirtuous clergyman remarked of the old gen'l'm'n with the dropsy, ven he said, that upon the whole he thought he'd raythor leave his property to his vife than build a chapel vith it."

"But consider, Sam," Mr. Pickwick remonstrated, "the sum is so small that it can very easily be paid; and having made up my mind that you shall stop with me, you should recollect how much more useful you would be, if you could go outside the walls."

"Wery much obliged to you, sir," replied Mr. Weller gravely; "but I'd raythor not."

"Rather not do what, Sam?"

"Wy, sir, I'd raythor not let myself down to ask a favor o' this here unremorseful enemy."

"But it is no favor asking him to take his money. Sam," reasoned Mr. Pickwick.

"Beg your pardon, sir," rejoined Sam; "but it 'ud be a wery great favor to pay it, and he don't deserve none; that's were it is, sir."

Here Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his nose with an air of some vexation, Mr. Weller thought it prudent to change the theme of the discourse.

"I takes my determination on principle, sir," remarked Sam, "and you take yours on the same ground; wich puts me in mind o' the man as killed his-self on principle: wich o' course you've heerd on, sir." Mr. Weller paused when he arrived at this point, and cast a comical look at his master out of the corners of his eyes.

"There is no 'of course' in the case, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, gradually breaking into a smile, in spite of the uneasiness which Sam's obstinacy had given him. "The fame of the gentleman in question, never reached my ears."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Weller. "You astonish me, sir; he wos a clerk in a gov'ment office, sir."

"Was he?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, he wos, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller; "and a wery pleasant gen'l'm'n too — one o' the percise and tidy sort, as puts their feet in little India-rubber fire-buckets wen it's wet weather, and never has no other bosom friends but hare-skins; he saved up his money on principle, wore a clean shirt ev'ry day on principle; never spoke

to none of his relations on principle, 'fear they shou'd want to borrow money of him; and was altogether, in fact, an uncommon agreeable character. He had his hair cut on principle vunce a fortnight, and contracted for his clothes on the economic principle — three suits a year, and send back the old uns. Being a wery reg'lar gen'l'm'n he din'd ev'ry day at the same place, where it was one and nine to cut off the joint; and a wery good one and nine's worth he used to cut, as the landlord often said, with the tears a-tricklin' down his face: let alone the way he used to poke the fire in the vinter time, which was a dead loss of fourpence ha'penny a-day: to say nothin' at all o' the aggrawation o' seein' him do it. So uncommon grand with it too! 'Post arter the next gen'l'm'n,' he sings out ev'ry day ven he comes in. 'See arter the Times, Thomas; let me look at the Mornin' Herald, wen it's out o' hand; don't forget to bespeak the Chronicle; and just bring the 'Tizer vill you;' and then he'd set vith his eyes fixed on the clock, and rush out just a quarter of a minit afore the time, to waylay the boy as wos a-comin' in with the evenin' paper, wich he'd read with sich intense interest and persewerance, as worked the other customers up to the wery confines o' desperation and insanity, 'specially one i-rascible old gen'l'm'n as the vaiter wos always obliged to keep a sharp eye on, at sich times, 'fear he should be tempted to commit some rash act with the carving-knife. Vell, sir, here he'd stop, occupyin' the best place for three hours, and never takin' nothin' arter his dinner, but sleep, and then he'd go away to a coffee-house a few streets off, and have a small pot o' coffee and four crumpets, arter wich he'd walk home to Kensington and go to bed. One night he was took wery ill; sends for the doctor; doctor comes

in a green fly: with a kind o' Robinson Crusoe set o' steps, as he could let down wen he got out, and pull up arter him wen he got in, to perwent the necessity o' the coachman's gettin' down, and thereby undeceivin' the public by letting 'em see that it wos only a livery coat he'd got on, and not the trousers to match. 'Wot's the matter?' says the doctor. 'Wery ill,' says the patient. 'Wot have you been a-eatin' on?' says the doctor. 'Roast weal,' says the patient. 'Wot's the last thing you dewoured?' says the doctor. 'Crumpets,' says the patient. 'That's it,' says the doctor. 'I'll send you a box of pills directly, and don't you never take no more of 'em,' he says. 'No more o' wot?' says the patient —'Pills!' 'No; crumpets,' says the doctor. 'Wy?' says the patient, starting up in bed; 'I've eat four crumpets, ev'ry night for fifteen year, on principle.' 'Well, then, you'd better leave 'em off, on principle,' says the doctor. 'Crumpets is wholesome, sir,' says the patient. 'Crumpets is *not* wholesome, sir,' says the doctor, wery fierce. 'But they're so cheap,' says the patient, comin' down a little, 'and so wery fillin' at the price.' 'They'd be dear to you at any price; dear if you wos paid to eat 'em,' says the doctor. 'Four crumpets a-night,' he says, 'vill do your business in six months!' The patient looks him full in the face, and turns it over in his mind for a long time, and at last he says, 'Are you sure o' that 'ere, sir?' 'I'll stake my professional reputation on it,' says the doctor. 'How many crumpets at a sittin', do you think 'ud kill me off at once?' says the patient. 'I don't know,' says the doctor. 'Do you think half a crown's worth 'ud do it?' says the patient. 'I think it might,' says the doctor. 'Three shillings' wurth 'ud be sure to do it, I s'pose?' says the

patient. 'Certainly,' says the doctor. 'Wery good,' says the patient; 'good-night.' Next mornin' he gets up, has a fire lit, orders in three shillins' wurth o' crumpets, toasts 'em all, eats 'em all, and blows his brains out."

"What did he do that for?" inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly; for he was considerably startled by this tragical termination of the narrative.

"Wot did he do it for, sir!" reiterated Sam. "Wy, in support of his great principle that crumpets wos wholesome, and to show that he wouldn't be put out of his way for nobody!"

With such like shiftings and changings of the discourse, did Mr. Weller meet his master's questioning on the night of his taking up his residence in the Fleet. Finding all gentle remonstrance useless, Mr. Pickwick at length yielded a reluctant consent to his taking lodgings by the week, of a bald-headed cobbler, who rented a small slip-room in one of the upper galleries. To this humble apartment Mr. Weller moved a mattress and bedding, which he hired of Mr. Roker; and, by the time he lay down upon it at night, was as much at home as if he had been bred in the prison, and his whole family had vegetated therein for three generations.

"Do you alvays smoke arter you goes to bed, old cock?" inquired Mr. Weller of his landlord, when they had both retired for the night.

"Yes, I does, young bantam," replied the cobbler.

"Will you allow me to in-quire wy you make up your bed under that 'ere deal table?" said Sam.

"'Cause I was always used to a four-poster afore I came here, and I find the legs of the table answer just as well," replied the cobbler.

"You're a character, sir," said Sam.

"I haven't got anything of the kind belonging to me," rejoined the cobbler, shaking his head; "and if you want to meet with a good one, I'm afraid you'll find some difficulty in suiting yourself at this register office."

The above short dialogue took place as Mr. Weller lay extended on his mattress at one end of the room, and the cobbler on his, at the other; the apartment being illumined by the light of a rush candle, and the cobbler's pipe: which was glowing, below the table, like a red-hot coal. The conversation, brief as it was, predisposed Mr. Weller strongly in his landlord's favor; and raising himself on his elbow he took a more lengthened survey of his appearance than he had yet had either time or inclination to make.

He was a sallow man — all cobblers are; and had a strong bristly beard — all cobblers have; his face was a queer, good-tempered, crooked-featured piece of workmanship, ornamented with a couple of eyes that must have worn a very joyous expression at one time, for they sparkled yet. The man was sixty, by years, and Heaven knows how old by imprisonment, so that his having any look, approaching to mirth or contentment, was singular enough. He was a little man, and being half doubled up as he lay in bed, looked about as long as he ought to have been without his legs. He had a great red pipe in his mouth, and was smoking, and staring at the rush-light, in a state of enviable placidity.

"Have you been here long?" inquired Sam, breaking the silence which had lasted for some time.

"Twelve year," replied the cobbler, biting the end of his pipe as he spoke.

"Contempt?" inquired Sam.

The cobbler nodded.

"Well, then," said Sam, with some sternness, "wot do you persevere in bein' obstinit' for: vastin' your precious life away, in this here magnified pound? Wy don't you give in, and tell the Chancellorship that you're wery sorry for makin' his court contemptible, and you won't do so no more?"

The cobbler put his pipe in the corner of his mouth, while he smiled, and then brought it back to its old place again, but said nothing.

"Wy don't you?" said Sam, urging his question strenuously.

"Ah," said the cobbler, "you don't quite understand these matters. What do you suppose ruined me, now?"

"Wy," said Sam, trimming the rushlight, "I 'spose the beginnin' wos, that you got into debt, eh?"

"Never owed a farden," said the cobbler; "try again."

"Well, perhaps," said Sam, "you bought houses, wich is delicate English for goin' mad: or took to buildin', wich is a medical term for bein' incurable."

The cobbler shook his head and said, "Try again."

"You didn't go to law, I hope?" said Sam, suspiciously.

"Never in my life," replied the cobbler. "The fact is, I was ruined by having money left me."

"Come, come," said Sam, "that von't do. I wish some rich enemy 'ud try to vork *my* destruction in that 'ere vay. I'd let him."

"Oh, I dare say you don't believe it," said the cobbler, quietly smoking his pipe. "I wouldn't if I was you; but it's true for all that."

"How wos it?" inquired Sam, half induced to believe the fact already, by the look the cobbler gave him.

"Just this," replied the cobbler; "an old gentleman that I worked for, down in the country, and a humble relation of whose I married — she's dead, God bless her, and thank Him for it! — was seized with a fit and went off."

"Where?" inquired Sam, who was growing sleepy after the numerous events of the day.

"How should I know where he went?" said the cobbler, speaking through his nose in an intense enjoyment of his pipe. "He went off dead."

"Oh, that indeed," said Sam. "Well?"

"Well," said the cobbler, "he left five thousand pound behind him."

"And wery gen-teel in him so to do," said Sam.

"One of which," continued the cobbler, "he left to me, 'cause I'd married his relation you see."

"Wery good," murmured Sam.

"And being surrounded by a great number of nieces and nevys, as was always a-quarrelling and fighting among themselves for the property, he makes me his executor, and leaves the rest to me: in trust, to divide it among 'em as the will prowided."

"Wot do you mean by leaving it on trust?" inquired Sam, waking up a little. "If it a'n't ready money, were's the use on it?"

"It's a law term, that's all," said the cobbler.

"I don't think that," said Sam, shaking his head. "There's wery little trust at that shop. Hows'ever go on."

"Well," said the cobbler, "when I was going to take out a probate of the will, the nieces and nevys, who was desperately disappointed at not getting all the money, enters a caveat against it."

"What's that?" inquired Sam.

"A legal instrument, which is as much as to say, it's no go," replied the cobbler.

"I see," said Sam, "a sort of brother-in-law o' the have-his-carcass. Well."

"But," continued the cobbler, "finding that they couldn't agree among themselves, and consequently couldn't get up a case against the will, they withdrew the caveat, and I paid all the legacies. I'd hardly done it, when one nevy brings an action to set the will aside. The case comes on, some months afterwards, afore a deaf old gentleman, in a back room somewhere down by Paul's Church-yard; and arter four counsels had taken a day apiece to buther him regularly, he takes a day or two to consider, and read the evidence in six vollums, and then gives his judgment that how the testator was not quite right in his head, and I must pay all the money back again, and all the costs. I appealed; the case come on before three or four very sleepy gentlemen, who had heard it all before in the other court, where they're lawyers without work; the only difference being, that, there, they're called doctors, and in the other place delegates, if you understand that; and they very dutifully confirmed the decision of the old gentleman below. After that, we went into Chancery, where we are still, and where I shall always be. My lawyers have had all my thousand pound long ago; and what between the estate, as they call it, and the costs, I'm here for ten thousand, and shall stop here, till I die, mending shoes. Some gentlemen have talked of bringing it afore parliament, and I dare say would have done it, only they hadn't time to come to me, and I hadn't power to go to them, and they got tired of my long letters, and dropped the business. And this is God's truth, without one word of suppression or exag-

geration, as fifty people, both in this place and out of it, very well know."

The cobbler paused to ascertain what effect his story had produced on Sam; but finding that he had dropped asleep, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, sighed, put it down, drew the bedclothes over his head, and went to sleep too.

Mr. Pickwick was sitting at breakfast, alone, next morning: Sam being busily engaged in the cobbler's room, polishing his master's shoes and brushing the black gaiters: when there came a knock at the door, which, before Mr. Pickwick could cry "Come in," was followed by the appearance of a head of hair and a cotton-velvet cap, both of which articles of dress he had no difficulty in recognizing as the personal property of Mr. Smangle.

"How are you?" said that worthy, accompanying the inquiry with a score or two of nods; "I say — do you expect anybody this morning? Three men — devilish gentlemanly fellows — have been asking after you downstairs, and knocking at every door on the hall flight; for which they've been most infernally blown up by the collegians, that had the trouble of opening 'em."

"Dear me! how very foolish of them," said Mr. Pickwick, rising. "Yes; I have no doubt they are some friends whom I rather expected to see, yesterday."

"Friends of yours!" exclaimed Smangle, seizing Mr. Pickwick by the hand. "Say no more. Curse me, they're friends of mine from this minute, and friends of Mivins's too. Infernal pleasant, gentlemanly, dog, Mivins, isn't he?" said Smangle, with great feeling.

"I know so little of the gentleman," said Mr. Pickwick, hesitating, "that I" ——

"I know you do," interposed Smangle, clasping Mr. Pickwick by the shoulder. "You shall know him better. You'll be delighted with him. That man, sir," said Smangle, with a solemn countenance, "has comic powers that would do honor to Drury Lane Theatre."

"Has he indeed?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, by Jove he has!" replied Smangle. "Hear him come the four cats in the wheelbarrow — four distinct cats, sir, I pledge you my honor. Now you know that's infernal clever! Dam'me, you can't help liking a man, when you see these traits about him. He's only one fault — that little failing I mentioned to you, you know."

As Mr. Smangle shook his head in a confidential and sympathizing manner at this juncture, Mr. Pickwick felt that he was expected to say something, so he said "Ah!" and looked restlessly at the door.

"Ah!" echoed Mr. Smangle, with a long-drawn sigh. "He's delightful company, that man is, sir — I don't know better company anywhere; but he has that one drawback. If the ghost of his grandfather, sir, was to rise before him this minute, he'd ask him for the loan of his acceptance on an eighteenpenny stamp."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," added Mr. Smangle; "and if he'd the power of raising him again, he would, in two months and three days from this time, to renew the bill!"

"These are very remarkable traits," said Mr. Pickwick; "but I'm afraid that while we are talking here, my friends may be in a state of great perplexity at not finding me."

"I'll show 'em the way," said Smangle, making for the door. "Good-day. I won't disturb you while they're here, you know. By the by" ——

As Smangle pronounced the last three words, he stopped suddenly, reclosed the door which he had opened, and, walking softly back to Mr. Pickwick, stepped close up to him on tiptoe, and said in a very soft whisper:

"You couldn't make it convenient to lend me half-a-crown till the latter end of next week, could you?"

Mr. Pickwick could scarcely forbear smiling, but managing to preserve his gravity, he drew forth the coin, and placed it in Mr. Smangle's palm; upon which, that gentleman, with many nods and winks, implying profound mystery, disappeared in quest of the three strangers, with whom he presently returned; and having coughed thrice, and nodded as many times, as an assurance to Mr. Pickwick that he should not forget to pay, he shook hands all round, in an engaging manner, and at length took himself off.

"My dear friends," said Mr. Pickwick, shaking hands alternately with Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, who were the three visitors in question, "I am delighted to see you."

The triumvirate were much affected. Mr. Tupman shook his head deploringly; Mr. Snodgrass drew forth his handkerchief, with undisguised emotion; and Mr. Winkle retired to the window, and sniffed aloud.

"Mornin', gen'l'm'n," said Sam, entering at the moment with the shoes and gaiters; "avay with melincholly, as the little boy said ven his school-missis died. Velcome to the College, gen'l'm'n."

"This foolish fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, tapping Sam on the head as he knelt down to button up his master's gaiters: "This foolish fellow has got himself arrested, in order to be near me."

"What!" exclaimed the three friends.

"Yes, gen'l'm'n," said Sam, "I'm a — stand steady, sir, if you please — I'm a pris'ner, gen'l'm'n; con-fined, as the lady said."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Mr. Winkle, with unaccountable vehemence.

"Hallo, sir!" responded Sam, looking up. "Wot's the matter, sir?"

"I had hoped, Sam, that —— nothing, nothing," said Mr. Winkle, precipitately.

There was something so very abrupt and unsettled in Mr. Winkle's manner, that Mr. Pickwick involuntarily looked at his two friends, for an explanation.

"We don't know," said Mr. Tupman, answering this mute appeal aloud. "He has been much excited for two days past, and his whole demeanor very unlike what it usually is. We fear there must be something the matter, but he resolutely denies it."

"No, no," said Mr. Winkle, coloring beneath Mr. Pickwick's gaze; "there is really nothing. I assure you there is nothing, my dear sir. It will be necessary for me to leave town, for a short time, on private business, and I had hoped to have prevailed upon you to allow Sam to accompany me."

Mr. Pickwick looked more astonished than before.

"I think," faltered Mr. Winkle, "that Sam would have had no objection to do so; but, of course, his being a prisoner here, renders it impossible. So I must go alone."

As Mr. Winkle said these words, Mr. Pickwick felt, with some astonishment, that Sam's fingers were trembling at the gaiters, as if he were rather surprised or startled. Sam looked up at Mr. Winkle, too, when he had finished

speaking; and though the glance they exchanged was instantaneous, they seemed to understand each other.

"Do you know anything of this, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, sharply.

"No, I don't, sir," replied Mr. Weller, beginning to button with extraordinary assiduity.

"Are you sure, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Wy, sir," responded Mr. Weller; "I'm sure so far, that I've never heerd anythin' on the subject afore this moment. If I makes any guess about it," added Sam, looking at Mr. Winkle, "I haven't got any right to say what it is, fear it should be a wrong 'un."

"I have no right to make any further inquiry into the private affairs of a friend, however intimate a one," said Mr. Pickwick, after a short silence; "at present let me merely say, that I do not understand this at all. There — we have had quite enough of the subject."

Thus expressing himself, Mr. Pickwick led the conversation to different topics, and Mr. Winkle gradually appeared more at ease, though still very far from being completely so. They had all so much to converse about, that the morning very quickly passed away: and when, at three o'clock, Mr. Weller produced upon the little dining-table, a roast leg of mutton and an enormous meat-pie: with sundry dishes of vegetables, and pots of porter, which stood upon the chairs, or the sofa-bedstead, or where they could: everybody felt disposed to do justice to the meal, notwithstanding that the meat had been purchased, and dressed, and the pie made, and baked, at the prison-cookery hard by.

To these succeeded a bottle or two of very good wine, for which a messenger was despatched by Mr. Pickwick to the Horn Coffee-house, in Doctors' Commons. The

bottle or two, indeed, might be more properly described as a bottle or six, for by the time it was drunk and tea over, the bell began to ring, for strangers to withdraw.

But, if Mr. Winkle's behavior had been unaccountable in the morning, it became perfectly unearthly and solemn when, under the influence of his feelings, and his share of the bottle or six, he prepared to take leave of his friend. He lingered behind, until Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass had disappeared, and then fervently clenched Mr. Pickwick's hand, with an expression of face, in which deep and mighty resolve was fearfully blended with the very concentrated essence of gloom.

"Good-night, my dear sir!" said Mr. Winkle between his set teeth.

"Bless you, my dear fellow!" replied the warm-hearted Mr. Pickwick, as he returned the pressure of his young friend's hand.

"Now then!" cried Mr. Tupman from the gallery.

"Yes, yes, directly," replied Mr. Winkle. "Good night!"

"Good-night," said Mr. Pickwick.

There was another good-night, and another, and half-a-dozen more after that, and still Mr. Winkle had fast hold of his friend's hand, and was looking into his face with the same strange expression.

"*Is* anything the matter?" said Mr. Pickwick at last, when his arm was quite sore with shaking.

"Nothing," said Mr. Winkle.

"Well then, good-night," said Mr. Pickwick, attempting to disengage his hand.

"My friend, my benefactor, my honored companion," murmured Mr. Winkle, catching at his wrist. "Do not judge me harshly; do not, when you hear that, driven to extremity by hopeless obstacles, I"——

"Now then," said Mr. Tupman, reappearing at the door. "Are you coming, or are we to be locked in?"

"Yes, yes, I am ready," replied Mr. Winkle. And with a violent effort he tore himself away.

As Mr. Pickwick was gazing down the passage after them in silent astonishment, Sam Weller appeared at the stair-head, and whispered for one moment in Mr. Winkle's ear.

"Oh certainly, depend upon me," said that gentleman, aloud.

"Thankee, sir. You won't forget, sir?" said Sam.

"Of course not," replied Mr. Winkle.

"Wish you luck, sir," said Sam, touching his hat. "I should very much liked to ha' joined you, sir; but the gov'ner o' course is pairamount."

"It is very much to your credit that you remain here," said Mr. Winkle. With these words they disappeared down the stairs.

"Very extraordinary," said Mr. Pickwick, going back into his room, and seating himself at the table in a musing attitude. "What *can* that young man be going to do!"

He had sat ruminating about the matter for some time, when the voice of Roker, the turnkey, demanded whether he might come in.

"By all means," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I've brought you a softer pillow, sir," said Roker, "instead of the temporary one you had last night."

"Thank you," said Mr. Pickwick. "Will you take a glass of wine?"

"You're wery good, sir," replied Mr. Roker, accepting the proffered glass. "Yours, sir."

"Thank you," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I'm sorry to say that your landlord's very bad to-night, sir," said Roker, setting down his glass, and inspecting the lining of his hat preparatory to putting it on again.

"What! The Chancery prisoner!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"He won't be a Chancery prisoner wery long, sir," replied Roker, turning his hat round, so as to get the maker's name right side upwards, as he looked into it.

"You make my blood run cold," said Mr. Pickwick. "What do you mean?"

"He's been consumptive for a long time past," said Mr. Roker, "and he's taken wery bad in breath to-night. The doctor said, six months ago, that nothing but change of air could save him."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick; "has this man been slowly murdered by the law for six months!"

"I don't know about that, sir," replied Roker, weighing the hat by the brims in both hands. "I suppose he'd have been took the same wherever he was. He went into the infirmary, this morning; the doctor says his strength is to be kept up as much as possible; and the warden's sent him wine and broth and that, from his own house. It's not the warden's fault, you know sir."

"Of course not," replied Mr. Pickwick hastily.

"I'm afraid, however," said Roker shaking his head, "that it's all up with him. I offered Neddy two six-penn'orths to one upon it just now, but he wouldn't take it, and quite right. Thankee, sir. Good-night, sir."

"Stay," said Mr. Pickwick earnestly. "Where is this infirmary?"

"Just over where you slept, sir," replied Roker. "I'll show you, if you like to come." Mr. Pickwick snatched up his hat without speaking, and followed at once.

The turnkey led the way in silence; and, gently raising the latch of the room-door, motioned Mr. Pickwick to enter. It was a large, bare, desolate room, with a number of stump bedsteads made of iron: on one of which lay stretched the shadow of a man: wan, pale, and ghastly. His breathing was hard and thick, and he moaned painfully as it came and went. At the bedside, sat a short old man in a cobbler's apron, who, by the aid of a pair of horn spectacles, was reading from the Bible aloud. It was the fortunate legatee.

The sick man laid his hand upon his attendant's arm, and motioned him to stop. He closed the book, and laid it on the bed.

"Open the window," said the sick man.

He did so. The noise of carriages and carts; the rattle of wheels; the cries of men and boys; all the busy sounds of a mighty multitude instinct with life and occupation, blended into one deep murmur; floated into the room. Above the hoarse loud hum, arose, from time to time, a boisterous laugh; or a scrap of some jingling song, shouted forth, by one of the giddy crowd, would strike upon the ear, for an instant, and then be lost amidst the roar of voices and the tramp of footsteps — the breaking of the billows of the restless sea of life, that rolled heavily on, without. Melancholy sounds to a quiet listener at any time; how melancholy to the watcher by the bed of death!

"There is no air here," said the sick man faintly. "The place pollutes it; it was fresh round about, when I walked there, years ago; but it grows hot and heavy in passing these walls. I cannot breathe it."

"We have breathed it together, for a long time," said the old man. "Come, come!"

There was a short silence, during which the two spectators approached the bed. The sick man drew a hand of his old fellow-prisoner towards him, and pressing it affectionately between both his own, retained it in his grasp.

"I hope," he gasped after a while — so faintly that they bent their ears close over the bed, to catch the half-formed sounds his pale lips gave vent to — "I hope my merciful Judge will bear in mind my heavy punishment on earth. Twenty years, my friend, twenty years in this hideous grave! My heart broke when my child died, and I could not even kiss him, in his little coffin. My loneliness since then, in all this noise and riot, has been very dreadful. May God forgive me! He has seen my solitary, lingering death."

He folded his hands, and murmuring something more they could not hear, fell into a sleep — only a sleep at first, for they saw him smile.

They whispered together for a little time, and the turnkey, stooping over the pillow, drew hastily back. "He has got his discharge, by G —!" said the man.

He had. But he had grown so like death in life, that they knew not when he died.

CHAPTER XLV.

DESCRIPTIVE OF AN AFFECTING INTERVIEW BETWEEN MR. SAMUEL WELLER AND A FAMILY PARTY. MR. PICKWICK MAKES A TOUR OF THE DIMINUTIVE WORLD HE INHABITS, AND RESOLVES TO MIX WITH IT, IN FUTURE, AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE.

A FEW mornings after his incarceration, Mr. Samuel Weller, having arranged his master's room with all possible care, and seen him comfortably seated over his books and papers, withdrew to employ himself for an hour or two to come, as he best could. It was a fine morning, and it occurred to Sam that a pint of porter in the open air would lighten his next quarter of an hour or so, as well as any little amusement in which he could indulge.

Having arrived at this conclusion, he betook himself to the tap, and having purchased the beer, and obtained, moreover, the day-but-one-before-yesterday's paper, he repaired to the skittle-ground, and seating himself on a bench, proceeded to enjoy himself in a very sedate and methodical manner.

First of all, he took a refreshing draught of the beer, and then he looked up at a window, and bestowed a Platonic wink on a young lady who was peeling potatoes thereat. Then he opened the paper, and folded it so as

to get the police reports outward; and this being a vexatious and difficult thing to do, when there is any wind stirring, he took another draught of the beer when he had accomplished it. Then, he read two lines of the paper, and stopped short, to look at a couple of men who were finishing a game at rackets, which, being concluded, he cried out "wery good" in an approving manner, and looked round upon the spectators, to ascertain whether their sentiments coincided with his own. This involved the necessity of looking up at the windows also; and as the young lady was still there, it was an act of common politeness to wink again, and to drink to her good health in dumb show, in another draught of the beer, which Sam did; and having frowned hideously upon a small boy who had noted this latter proceeding with open eyes, he threw one leg over the other, and, holding the newspaper in both hands, began to read in real earnest.

He had hardly composed himself into the needful state of abstraction, when he thought he heard his own name proclaimed in some distant passage. Nor was he mistaken, for it quickly passed from mouth to mouth, and in a few seconds the air teemed with shouts of "Weller!"

"Here!" roared Sam, in a stentorian voice. "Wot's the matter? Who wants him? Has an express come to say that his country-house is afire?"

"Somebody wants you in the hall," said a man who was standing by.

"Just mind that 'ere paper and the pot, old feller, will you?" said Sam. "I'm a-comin'. Blessed, if they wos a-callin' me to the bar, they couldn't make more noise about it."

Accompanying these words with a gentle rap on the head of the young gentleman before noticed, who, uncon-

scious of his close vicinity to the person in request, was screaming "Weller!" with all his might, Sam hastened across the ground, and ran up the steps into the hall. Here, the first object that met his eyes was his beloved father sitting on a bottom stair, with his hat in his hand, shouting out "Weller!" in his very loudest tone, at half-minute intervals.

"Wot are you a-roarin' at?" said Sam impetuously, when the old gentleman had discharged himself of another shout; "makin' yourself so precious hot that you looks like a aggrawated glass-blower. Wot's the matter?"

"Aha!" replied the old gentleman, "I begun to be afeerd that you'd gone for a walk round the Regency Park, Sammy."

"Come," said Sam, "none o' them taunts ag'in' the wictim o' avarice, and come off that 'ere step. Wot are you a-settin' down there for? I don't live there."

"I've got sich a game for you, Sammy," said the elder Mr. Weller, rising.

"Stop a minit'," said Sam, "you're all vite behind."

"That's right, Sammy, rub it off," said Mr. Weller, as his son dusted him. "It might look personal here, if a man walked about with any whitevash on his clothes, eh, Sammy?"

As Mr. Weller exhibited in this place unequivocal symptoms of an approaching fit of chuckling, Sam interposed to stop it.

"Keep quiet, do," said Sam, "there never vos such a old picter-card born. Wot are you bustin' vith, now?"

"Sammy," said Mr. Weller, wiping his forehead, "I'm afeerd that vun o' these days I shall laugh myself into a appleplexy, my boy."

"Vell, then, wot do you do it for?" said Sam. "Now, wot have you got to say?"

"Who do you think's come here with me, Samivel?" said Mr. Weller, drawing back a pace or two, pursing up his mouth, and extending his eyebrows.

"Pell?" said Sam.

Mr. Weller shook his head, and his red cheeks expanded with the laughter that was endeavoring to find a vent.

"Mottled-faced man, p'r'aps?" suggested Sam.

Again Mr. Weller shook his head.

"Who then?" asked Sam.

"Your mother-in-law," said Mr. Weller; and it was lucky he did say it, or his cheeks must inevitably have cracked, from their most unnatural distension.

"Your mother-in-law, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, "and the red-nosed man, my boy; and the red-nosed man. Ho! ho! ho!"

With this, Mr. Weller launched into convulsions of laughter, while Sam regarded him with a broad grin gradually overspreading his whole countenance.

"They've come to have a little ser'ous talk vith you, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, wiping his eyes. "Don't let out nothin' about the unnat'ral creditor, Sammy."

"Wot, don't they know who it is?" inquired Sam.

"Not a bit on it," replied his father.

"Vere are they?" said Sam, reciprocating all the old gentleman's grins.

"In the snuggery," rejoined Mr. Weller. "Catch the red-nosed man a-goin' anyvere but vere the liquors is; not he, Samivel — not he. Ve'd a wery pleasant ride along the road from the Markis this mornin', Sammy," said Mr. Weller, when he felt himself equal to the task

of speaking in an articulate manner. "I drove the old piebald in that 'ere little shaycart as belonged to your mother-in-law's first wenter, into vich a harm-cheer wos lifted for the shepherd; and I'm blest," said Mr. Weller, with a look of deep scorn — "I'm blest if they didn't bring a portable flight o' steps out into the road a-front o' our door, for him to get up by."

"You don't mean that?" said Sam.

"I *do* mean that, Sammy," replied his father, "and I vish you could ha' seen how tight he held on by the sides wen he did get up, as if he wos afeerd o' being precipitayted down full six foot, and dashed into a million o' hatoms. He tumbled in at last, however, and avay ve vent; and I rayther think — I say I rayther think, Samivel — that he found his-self a little jolted wen we turned the corners."

"Wot, I s'pose you happened to drive up ag'in' a post or two?" said Sam.

"I'm afeerd," replied Mr. Weller, in a rapture of winks, "I'm afeerd I took vun or two on 'em, Sammy; he wos a-flyin' out o' the harm-cheer all the way."

Here the old gentleman shook his head from side to side, and was seized with a hoarse internal rumbling, accompanied with a violent swelling of the countenance, and a sudden increase in the breadth of all his features — symptoms which alarmed his son not a little.

"Don't be frightened, Sammy; don't be frightened," said the old gentleman, when, by dint of much struggling, and various convulsive stamps upon the ground, he had recovered his voice. "It's only a kind o' quiet laugh as I'm a-tryin' to come, Sammy."

"Well, if that's wot it is," said Sam, "you'd better not try to come it ag'in. You'll find it raythe a dangerous inwention."

"Don't you like it, Sammy?" inquired the old gentleman.

"Not at all," replied Sam.

"Well," said Mr. Weller, with the tears still running down his cheeks, "it 'ud ha' been a wery great accommodation to me if I could ha' done it, and 'ud ha' saved a good many vords atween your mother-in-law and me, sometimes; but I'm afeerd you're right, Sammy: it's too much in the appleplexy line — a deal too much, Samivel."

This conversation brought them to the door of the snuggery, into which Sam — pausing for an instant to look over his shoulder, and cast a sly leer at his respected progenitor, who was still giggling behind — at once led the way.

"Mother-in-law," said Sam, politely saluting the lady, "wery much obliged to you for this here wisit. Shepherd, how air you?"

"Oh, Samuel!" said Mrs. Weller. "This is dreadful."

"Not a bit on it, mum," replied Sam. "Is it, shepherd?"

Mr. Stiggins raised his hands, and turned up his eyes, till the whites — or rather the yellows — were alone visible, but made no reply in words.

"Is this here gen'l'm'n troubled vith any painful complaint?" said Sam, looking to his mother-in-law for explanation.

"The good man is grieved to see you here, Samuel," replied Mrs. Weller.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Sam. "I wos afeerd, from his manner, that he might ha' forgotten to take pepper vith that 'ere last cowcumber he eat. Set down, sir; ve

make no extra charge for the settin' down, as the king remarked wen he blow'd up his ministers."

"Young man," said Mr. Stiggins, ostentatiously, "I fear you are not softened by imprisonment."

"Beg your pardon, sir," replied Sam, "wot wos you graciously pleased to hobserve?"

"I apprehend, young man, that your nature is no softer for this chastening," said Mr. Stiggins, in a loud voice.

"Sir," replied Sam, "you're wery kind to say so. I hope my natur' is *not* a soft vun, sir. Wery much obliged to you for your good opinion, sir."

At this point of the conversation, a sound, indecorously approaching to a laugh, was heard to proceed from the chair in which the elder Mr. Weller was seated; upon which Mrs. Weller, on a hasty consideration of all the circumstances of the case, considered it her bounden duty to become gradually hysterical.

"Weller," said Mrs. W. (the old gentleman was seated in a corner); "Weller! come forth."

"Wery much obleeged to you, my dear," replied Mr. Weller; "but I'm quite comfortable vere I am."

Upon this, Mrs. Weller burst into tears.

"Wot's gone wrong, mum?" said Sam.

"Oh, Samuel!" replied Mrs. Weller, "your father makes me wretched. Will nothing do him good?"

"Do you hear this here?" said Sam. "Lady vants to know vether nothin' 'ull do you good."

"Wery much indebted to Mrs. Weller for her po-lite inquiries, Sammy," replied the old gentleman. "I think a pipe vould benefit me a good deal. Could I be accommodated, Sammy?"

Here Mrs. Weller let fall some more tears, and Mr. Stiggins groaned.

"Hallo! here's this unfort'nate gen'l'm'n took ill ag'in," said Sam, looking round. "Were do you feel it now, sir?"

"In the same place, young man," rejoined Mr. Stiggins; "in the same place."

"Were may that be, sir?" inquired Sam, with great outward simplicity.

"In the buzzim, young man," replied Mr. Stiggins, placing his umbrella on his waistcoat.

At this affecting reply, Mrs. Weller, being wholly unable to suppress her feelings, sobbed aloud, and stated her conviction that the red-nosed man was a saint; whereupon Mr. Weller, senior, ventured to suggest, in an undertone, that he must be the representative of the united parishes of Saint Simon Without, and Saint Walker Within.

"I'm afeerd, mum," said Sam, "that this here gen-'l'm'n, with the twist in his countenance, feels rayther thirsty, with the melancholy spectacle afore him. Is it the case, mum?"

The worthy lady looked at Mr. Stiggins for a reply; that gentleman, with many rollings of the eye, clenched his throat with his right hand, and mimicked the act of swallowing, to intimate that he was athirst.

"I am afraid, Samuel, that his feelings have made him so, indeed," said Mrs. Weller, mournfully.

"Wot's your usual tap, sir?" replied Sam.

"Oh, my dear young friend," replied Mr. Stiggins, "all taps is vanities!"

"Too true; too true, indeed," said Mrs. Weller, murmuring a groan, and shaking her head assentingly.

"Well," said Sam, "I des-say they may be, sir; but

wich is your partickler wanity? Vich wanity do you like the flavor on, best, sir?"

"Oh, my dear young friend," replied Mr. Stiggins, "I despise them all. If," said Mr. Stiggins, "if there is any one of them less odious than another, it is the liquor called rum — warm, my dear young friend, with three lumps of sugar to the tumbler."

"Wery sorry to say, sir," said Sam, "that they don't allow that partickler wanity to be sold in this here establishment."

"Oh, the hardness of heart of these inveterate men!" ejaculated Mr. Stiggins. "Oh, the accursed cruelty of these inhuman persecutors!"

With these words, Mr. Stiggins again cast up his eyes, and rapped his breast with his umbrella; and it is but justice to the reverend gentleman to say, that his indignation appeared very real and unfeigned indeed.

After Mrs. Weller and the red-nosed gentleman had commented on this inhuman usage, in a very forcible manner, and had vented a variety of pious and holy execrations against its authors, the latter recommended a bottle of port-wine, warmed with a little water, spice, and sugar, as being grateful to the stomach, and savoring less of vanity than many other compounds. It was accordingly ordered to be prepared; pending its preparation the red-nosed man and Mrs. Weller looked at the elder W. and groaned.

"Well, Sammy," said that gentleman, "I hope you'll find your spirits rose by this here lively wisit. Wery cheerful and improvin' conwersation, a'n't it, Sammy?"

"You're a reprobate," replied Sam; "and I desire you won't address no more o' them ungraceful remarks to me."

So far from being edified by this very proper reply, the elder Mr. Weller at once relapsed into a broad grin; and this inexorable conduct causing the lady and Mr. Stiggins to close their eyes, and rock themselves to and fro on their chairs, in a troubled manner, he furthermore indulged in several acts of pantomime, indicative of a desire to pommel and wring the nose of the aforesaid Stiggins; the performance of which, appeared to afford him great mental relief. The old gentleman very narrowly escaped detection in one instance; for Mr. Stiggins happening to give a start on the arrival of the negus, brought his head in smart contact with the clenched fist with which Mr. Weller had been describing imaginary fireworks in the air, within two inches of his ear, for some minutes.

"Wot are you a-reachin' out your hand for the tumbler in that 'ere sawage way for?" said Sam, with great promptitude. "Don't you see you've hit the gen'l'm'n?"

"I didn't go to do it, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, in some degree abashed by the very unexpected occurrence of the incident.

"Try an in'ard application, sir," said Sam, as the red-nosed gentleman rubbed his head with a rueful visage. "Wot do you think o' that, for a go o' wanity warm, sir?"

Mr. Stiggins made no verbal answer, but his manner was expressive. He tasted the contents of the glass which Sam had placed in his hand; put his umbrella on the floor, and tasted it again: passing his hand placidly across his stomach twice or thrice; he then drank the whole at a breath, and smacking his lips, held out the tumbler for more.

Nor was Mrs. Weller behindhand in doing justice to the composition. The good lady began by protesting that she couldn't touch a drop — then took a small drop — then a large drop — and then a great many drops; and her feelings being of the nature of those substances which are powerfully affected by the application of strong waters, she dropped a tear with every drop of negus, and so got on, melting the feelings down, until at length she had arrived at a very pathetic and decent pitch of misery.

The elder Mr. Weller observed these signs and tokens with many manifestations of disgust, and when, after a second jug of the same, Mr. Stiggins began to sigh in a dismal manner, he plainly evinced his disapprobation of the whole proceedings, by sundry incoherent ramblings of speech, among which frequent angry repetitions of the word "gammon" were alone distinguishable to the ear.

"I'll tell you wot it is, Samivel, my boy," whispered the old gentleman into his son's ear, after a long and steadfast contemplation of his lady and Mr. Stiggins; "I think there must be somethin' wrong in your mother-in-law's inside, as vell as in that o' the red-nosed man."

"Wot do you mean?" said Sam.

"I mean this here, Sammy," replied the old gentleman, "that wot they drink, don't seem no nourishment to 'em; it all turns to warm water, and comes a-pourin' out o' their eyes. 'Pend upon it, Sammy, it's a constitootional infirmity."

Mr. Weller delivered this scientific opinion with many confirmatory frowns and nods: which, Mrs. Weller remarking, and concluding that they bore some disparaging reference either to herself or to Mr. Stiggins, or to both,

was on the point of becoming infinitely worse, when Mr. Stiggins, getting on his legs as well as he could, proceeded to deliver an edifying discourse for the benefit of the company, but more especially of Mr. Samuel, whom he adjured, in moving terms, to be upon his guard in that sink of iniquity into which he was cast; to abstain from all hypocrisy and pride of heart; and to take in all things exact pattern and copy by him (Stiggins), in which case he might calculate on arriving, sooner or later, at the comfortable conclusion, that, like him, he was a most estimable and blameless character, and that all his acquaintance and friends were hopelessly abandoned and profligate wretches: which consideration, he said, could not but afford him the liveliest satisfaction.

He furthermore conjured him to avoid, above all things, the vice of intoxication, which he likened unto the filthy habits of swine, and to those poisonous and baleful drugs which being chewed in the mouth, are said to filch away the memory. At this point of his discourse, the reverend and red-nosed gentleman became singularly incoherent, and staggering to and fro in the excitement of his eloquence, was fain to catch at the back of a chair to preserve his perpendicular.

Mr. Stiggins did not desire his hearers to be upon their guard against those false prophets and wretched mockers of religion, who, without sense to expound its first doctrines, or hearts to feel its first principles, are more dangerous members of society than the common criminal: imposing, as they necessarily do, upon the weakest and worst-informed natures, casting scorn and contempt on what should be held most sacred, and bringing into partial disrepute large bodies of virtuous and

well-conducted persons of many excellent sects and persuasions; but as he leant over the back of the chair for a considerable time, and closing one eye, winked a good deal with the other, it is presumed that he thought all this, but kept it to himself.

During the delivery of the oration, Mrs. Weller sobbed and wept at the end of the paragraphs: while Sam, sitting cross-legged on a chair and resting his arms on the top-rail, regarded the speaker with great suavity and blandness of demeanor, occasionally bestowing a look of recognition on the old gentleman, who was delighted at the beginning, and went to sleep about half-way.

"Brayvo! wery pretty!" said Sam, when the red-nosed man, having finished, pulled his worn gloves on: thereby thrusting his fingers through the broken tops till the knuckles were disclosed to view — "Wery pretty."

"I hope it may do you good, Samuel," said Mrs. Weller solemnly.

"I think it vill, mum," replied Sam.

"I wish I could hope that it would do your father good," said Mrs. Weller.

"Thankee, my dear," said Mr. Weller, senior. "How do *you* find yourself arter it, my love?"

"Scoffer!" exclaimed Mrs. Weller.

"Benighted man!" said the reverend Mr. Stiggins.

"If I don't get no better light than that 'ere moonshine o' yourn, my worthy creetur'," said the elder Mr. Weller, "it's wery likely as I shall continey to be a night coach till I'm took off the road altogether. Now, Mrs. We, if the piebald stands at livery much longer, he'll stand at nothin' as we go back, and p'r'aps that 'ere harm-cheer 'ull be tipped over into some hedge or another, with the shepherd in it."

At this supposition, the reverend Mr. Stiggins, in evident consternation, gathered up his hat and umbrella, and proposed an immediate departure, to which Mrs. Weller assented. Sam walked with them to the lodge-gate, and took a dutiful leave.

"A-do, Samivel," said the old gentleman.

"Wot's a-do?" inquired Sam.

"Well, good-by, then," said the old gentleman.

"Oh, that's wot you're a-aimin' at, is it?" said Sam. "Good-by!"

"Sammy," whispered Mr. Weller, looking cautiously round; "my duty to your gov'ner, and tell him if he thinks better o' this here bis'ness, to com-moonicate vith me. Me and a cab'net-maker has dewised a plan for gettin' him out. A pianner, Samivel — a pianner!" said Mr. Weller, striking his son on the chest with the back of his hand, and falling back a step or two.

"Wot do you mean?" said Sam.

"A pianner forty, Samivel," rejoined Mr. Weller, in a still more mysterious manner, "as he can have on hire; vun as von't play, Sammy."

"And wot 'ud be the good o' that?" said Sam.

"Let him send to my friend, the cab'net-maker, to fetch it back, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "Are you avake, now?"

"No," rejoined Sam.

"There a'n't no vurks in it," whispered his father. "It 'ull hold him easy, vith his hat and shoes on, and breathe through the legs, vich his holler. Have a passage ready taken for 'Merriker. The 'Merrikin gov'ment vill never give him up, ven they finds as he's got money to spend, Sammy. Let the gov'ner stop there, till Mrs. Bardell's dead, or Mr. Dodson and Fogg's hung, wich

last ewent I think is the most likely to happen first, Sammy; and then let him come back and write a book about the 'Merrikins as'll pay all his expenses and more, if he blows 'em up enough."

Mr. Weller delivered this hurried abstract of his plot with great vehemence of whisper; and then, as if fearful of weakening the effect of the tremendous communication, by any further dialogue, gave the coachman's salute, and vanished.

Sam had scarcely recovered his usual composure of countenance, which had been greatly disturbed by the secret communication of his respected relative, when Mr. Pickwick accosted him.

"Sam," said that gentleman.

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I am going for a walk round the prison, and I wish you to attend me. I see a prisoner we know coming this way, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"Wich, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller; "the gen'l'm'n vith the head o' hair, or the interestin' captive in the stockin's?"

"Neither," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "He is an older friend of yours, Sam."

"O' mine, sir?" exclaimed Mr. Weller.

"You recollect the gentleman very well, I dare say, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "or else you are more unmindful of your old acquaintances than I think you are. Hush! not a word, Sam — not a syllable. Here he is."

As Mr. Pickwick spoke, Jingle walked up. He looked less miserable than before, being clad in a half-worn suit of clothes, which, with Mr. Pickwick's assistance, had been released from the pawnbroker's. He wore clean linen too, and had had his hair cut. He was

very pale and thin, however; and as he crept slowly up, leaning on a stick, it was easy to see that he had suffered severely from illness and want, and was still very weak. He took off his hat, as Mr. Pickwick saluted him, and seemed much humbled and abashed at sight of Sam Weller.

Following close at his heels, came Mr. Job Trotter, in the catalogue of whose vices, want of faith and attachment to his companion could, at all events, find no place. He was still ragged and squalid, but his face was not quite so hollow as on his first meeting with Mr. Pickwick, a few days before. As he took off his hat to our benevolent old friend, he murmured some broken expressions of gratitude, and muttered something about having been saved from starving.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, impatiently interrupting him, "you can follow with Sam. I want to speak to you, Mr. Jingle. Can you walk without his arm?"

"Certainly, sir — all ready — not too fast — legs shaky — head queer — round and round — earthquaky sort of feeling — very."

"Here, give me your arm," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No, no," replied Jingle; "won't indeed — rather not."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Pickwick; "lean upon me, I desire, sir."

Seeing that he was confused and agitated, and uncertain what to do, Mr. Pickwick cut the matter short by drawing the invalided stroller's arm through his, and leading him away, without saying another word about it.

During the whole of this time, the countenance of Mr. Samuel Weller had exhibited an expression of the most overwhelming and absorbing astonishment that the im-

agination can portray. After looking from Job to Jingle, and from Jingle to Job in profound silence, he softly ejaculated the words, "Well, I *am* damn'd!" which he repeated at least a score of times: after which exertion, he appeared wholly bereft of speech, and again cast his eyes, first upon the one and then upon the other, in mute perplexity and bewilderment.

"Now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, looking back.

"I'm a-comin', sir," replied Mr. Weller, mechanically following his master; and still he lifted not his eyes from Mr. Job Trotter, who walked at his side, in silence.

Job kept his eyes fixed on the ground for some time. Sam, with his glued to Job's countenance, ran up against the people who were walking about, and fell over little children, and stumbled against steps and railings, without appearing at all sensible of it, until Job, looking stealthily up, said:

"How do you do, Mr. Weller?"

"It *is* him!" exclaimed Sam; and having established Job's identity beyond all doubt, he smote his leg, and vented his feelings in a long shrill whistle.

"Things has altered with me, sir," said Job.

"I should think they had," exclaimed Mr. Weller, surveying his companion's rags with undisguised wonder. "This is raythe a change for the worse, Mr. Trotter, as the gen'l'm'n said, wen he got two doubtful shillin's and sixpenn'orth o' pocket-pieces for a good half crown."

"It is, indeed," replied Job, shaking his head. "There is no deception now, Mr. Weller. Tears," said Job, with a look of momentary slyness — "tears are not the only proofs of distress, nor the best ones."

"No, they a'n't," replied Sam, expressively.

"They may be put on, Mr. Weller," said Job.

"I know they may," said Sam; "some people, indeed, has 'em always ready laid on, and can pull out the plug wenever they likes."

"Yes," replied Job; "but *these* sort of things are not so easily counterfeited, Mr. Weller, and it is a more painful process to get them up." As he spoke, he pointed to his sallow sunken cheeks, and, drawing up his coat-sleeve, disclosed an arm which looked as if the bone could be broken at a touch: so sharp and brittle did it appear, beneath its thin covering of flesh.

"Wot have you been a-doin' to yourself?" said Sam, recoiling.

"Nothing," replied Job.

"Nothin'!" echoed Sam.

"I have been doin' nothing for many weeks past," said Job; "and eating and drinking almost as little."

Sam took one comprehensive glance at Mr. Trotter's thin face and wretched apparel, and then, seizing him by the arm, commenced dragging him away with great violence.

"Where are you going, Mr. Weller?" said Job, vainly struggling in the powerful grasp of his old enemy.

"Come on," said Sam; "come on!" He deigned no further explanation until they reached the tap; and then called for a pot of porter, which was speedily produced.

"Now," said Sam, "drink that up, ev'ry drop on it; and then turn the pot upside down, to let me see as you've took the med'cine."

"But my dear Mr. Weller," remonstrated Job.

"Down vith it," said Sam, peremptorily.

Thus admonished, Mr. Trotter raised the pot to his lips, and, by gentle and almost imperceptible degrees, tilted it into the air. He paused once, and only once, to draw a long breath, but without raising his face from the vessel, which, in a few moments thereafter, he held out at arm's length, bottom upwards. Nothing fell upon the the ground but a few particles of froth, which slowly detached themselves from the rim, and trickled lazily down.

"Well done," said Sam. "How do you find yourself arter it?"

"Better, sir, I think I am better," responded Job.

"O' course you air," said Sam argumentatively. "It's like puttin' gas in a balloon; I can see with the naked eye that you gets stouter under the operation. Wot do you say to another o' the same di-mensions?"

"I would rather not, I am much obliged to you, sir," replied Job — "much rather not."

"Vell, then, wot do you say to some wittles?" inquired Sam.

"Thanks to your worthy governor, sir," said Mr. Trotter, "we have half a leg of mutton, baked, at a quarter before three, with the potatoes under it, to save boiling."

"Wot! Has *he* been a-purwidin' for you?" asked Sam, emphatically.

"He has, sir," replied Job. "More than that, Mr. Weller; my master being very ill, he got us a room — we were in a kennel before — and paid for it, sir; and come to look at us, at night, when nobody should know. Mr. Weller," said Job, with real tears in his eyes, for once, "I could serve that gentleman till I fell down dead at his feet."

"I say," said Sam, "I'll trouble you, my friend — none o' that!"

Job Trotter looked amazed.

"None o' that, I say, young feller," repeated Sam, firmly. "No man serves him but me. And now we're upon it, I'll let you into another secret besides that," said Sam, as he paid for the beer. "I never heerd, mind you, nor read of in story-books, nor see in picters, any angel in tights and gaiters — not even in spectacles, as I remember, though that may ha' been done for anythin' I know to the contrairey — but mark my vords, Job Trotter, he's a reg'lar thorough-bred angel for all that; and let me see the man as wentur's to tell me he knows a better vun." With this defiance, Mr. Weller buttoned up his change in a side-pocket; and, with many confirmatory nods and gestures, by the way, proceeded in search of the subject of discourse.

They found Mr. Pickwick, in company with Jingle, talking very earnestly, and not bestowing a look on the groups who were congregated on the racket-ground; they were very motley groups too, and well worth the looking at, if it were only in idle curiosity.

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, as Sam and his companion drew nigh, "you will see how your health becomes, and think about it meanwhile. Make the statement out for me when you feel yourself equal to the task, and I will discuss the subject with you when I have considered it. Now, go to your room. You are tired, and not strong enough to be out long."

Mr. Alfred Jingle, without one spark of his old animation — with nothing even of the dismal gayety which he had assumed when Mr. Pickwick first stumbled on him in his misery — bowed low without speaking, and mo-

tioning to Job not to follow him just yet, crept slowly away.

"Curious scene this, is it not, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking good-humoredly round.

"Wery much so, sir," replied Sam. "Wonders 'ull never cease," added Sam, speaking to himself. "I'm wery much mistaken if that 'ere Jingle worn't a-doin' somethin' in the water-cart way!"

The area formed by the wall in that part of the Fleet in which Mr. Pickwick stood, was just wide enough to make a good racket court: one side being formed, of course, by the wall itself, and the other by that portion of the prison which looked (or rather would have looked, but for the wall) towards St. Paul's Cathedral. Sauntering or sitting about, in every possible attitude of listless idleness, were a great number of debtors, the major part of whom were waiting in prison until their day of "going up" before the Insolvent Court should arrive, while others had been remanded for various terms, which they were idling away, as they best could. Some were shabby, some were smart, many dirty, a few clean; but there they all lounged, and loitered, and slunk about, with as little spirit or purpose as the beasts in a menagerie.

Lolling from the windows which commanded a view of this promenade, were a number of persons, some in noisy conversation with their acquaintance below, others playing at ball with some adventurous throwers outside; and others looking on at the racket-players, or watching the boys as they cried the game. Dirty slip-shod women passed and repassed, on their way to the cooking-house in one corner of the yard; children screamed, and fought, and played together, in another; the tumbling of the skit-

tles, and the shouts of the players, mingled perpetually with these and a hundred other sounds; and all was noise and tumult — save in a little miserable shed a few yards off, where there lay, all quiet and ghastly, the body of the Chancery prisoner who had died the night before, awaiting the mockery of an inquest. The body! It is the lawyer's term for the restless whirling mass of cares and anxieties, affections, hopes, and griefs, that make up the living man. The law *had* his body; and there it lay, clothed in grave-clothes, an awful witness to its tender mercy.

"Would you like to see a whistling-shop, sir?" inquired Job Trotter.

"What do you mean?" was Mr. Pickwick's counter inquiry.

"A vistlin' shop, sir," interposed Mr. Weller.

"What is that, Sam? A bird-fancier's?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your heart, no, sir," replied Job; "a whistling-shop, sir, is where they sell spirits." Mr. Job Trotter briefly explained here, that all persons, being prohibited under heavy penalties from conveying spirits into debtors' prisons; and such commodities being highly prized by the ladies and gentlemen confined therein: it had occurred to some speculative turnkey to connive, for certain lucrative considerations, at two or three prisoners' retailing the favorite article of gin, for their own profit and advantage.

"This plan you see, sir, has been gradually introduced into all the prisons for debt," said Mr. Trotter.

"And it has this wery great advantage," said Sam, "that the turnkeys takes wery good care to seize hold o' ev'ry body but them as pays 'em, that attempts the

willany, and wen it gets in the papers they're applauded for their wigilance ; so it cuts two ways — frightens other people from the trade, and elewates their own characters."

" Exactly so, Mr. Weller," observed Job.

" Well, but are these rooms never searched, to ascertain whether any spirits are concealed in them ? " said Mr. Pickwick.

" Cert'nly they are, sir," replied Sam ; " but the turnkeys knows beforehand, and gives the word to the wistlers, and you *may* wistle for it wen you go to look."

By this time, Job had tapped at a door, which was opened by a gentleman with an uncombed head, who bolted it after them when they had walked in, and grinned ; upon which Job grinned, and Sam also : whereupon Mr. Pickwick, thinking it might be expected of him, kept on smiling to the end of the interview.

The gentleman with the uncombed head appeared quite satisfied with this mute announcement of their business ; and producing a flat stone bottle, which might hold about a couple of quarts, from beneath his bedstead, he filled out three glasses of gin, which Job Trotter and Sam disposed of in a most workmanlike manner.

" Any more ? " said the whistling gentleman.

" No more," replied Job Trotter.

Mr. Pickwick paid, the door was unbolted, and out they came ; the uncombed gentleman bestowing a friendly nod upon Mr. Roker, who happened to be passing at the moment.

From this spot, Mr. Pickwick wandered along all the galleries, up and down all the staircases, and once again round the whole area of the yard. The great body of the prison population appeared to be Mivins, and Smangle, and the parson, and the butcher, and the leg, over

and over, and over again. There were the same squalor the same turmoil and noise, the same general characteristics, in every corner; in the best and the worst alike. The whole place seemed restless and troubled; and the people were crowding and flitting to and fro, like the shadows in an uneasy dream.

"I have seen enough," said Mr. Pickwick, as he threw himself into a chair in his little apartment. "My head aches with these scenes, and my heart too. Henceforth, I will be a prisoner in my own room."

And Mr. Pickwick steadfastly adhered to this determination. For three long months he remained shut up, all day; only stealing out, at night, to breathe the air, when the greater part of his fellow-prisoners were in bed or carousing in their rooms. His health was evidently beginning to suffer from the closeness of the confinement; but neither the often repeated entreaties of Perker and his friends, nor the still more frequently repeated warnings and admonitions of Mr. Samuel Weller, could induce him to alter one jot of his inflexible resolution.

CHAPTER XLVI.

RECORDS A TOUCHING ACT OF DELICATE FEELING, NOT UNMIXED WITH PLEASANTRY, ACHIEVED AND PERFORMED BY MESSRS. DODSON AND FOGG.

It was within a week of the close of the month of July, that a hackney cabriolet, number unrecorded, was seen to proceed at a rapid pace up Goswell Street; three people were squeezed into it besides the driver, who sat, of course, in his own particular little dickey at the side; over the apron were hung two shawls, belonging to all appearance to two small vixenish-looking ladies under the apron; between whom, compressed into a very small compass, there was stowed away, a gentleman of heavy and subdued demeanor, who, whenever he ventured to make an observation, was snapped up short, by one of the vixenish ladies before mentioned. Lastly, the two vixenish ladies and the heavy gentleman were giving the driver contradictory directions, all tending to the one point, that he should stop at Mrs. Bardell's door, which the heavy gentleman, in direct opposition to, and defiance of, the vixenish ladies, contended was a green door and not a yellow one.

"Stop at the house with the green door, driver," said the heavy gentleman.

"Oh! you perwerse creetur!" exclaimed one of the

vixenish ladies. "Drive to the 'ouse with the yellow door, cabmin."

Upon this, the cabman, who in a sudden effort to pull up at the house with the green door, had pulled the horse up so high, that he nearly pulled him backwards into the cabriolet, let the animal's fore-legs down to the ground again, and paused.

"Now vere am I to pull up?" inquired the driver. "Settle it among yourselves. All I ask is, vere?"

Here the contest was renewed with increased violence; and the horse being troubled with a fly on his nose, the cabman humanely employed his leisure in lashing him about the head, on the counter-irritation principle.

"Most wotes carries the day," said one of the vixenish ladies at length. "The 'ouse with the yellow door, cabmin."

But after the cabriolet had dashed up, in splendid style, to the house with the yellow door: "making," as one of the vixenish ladies triumphantly said, "acterrally more noise than if one had come in one's own carriage" —and after the driver had dismounted to assist the ladies in getting out, the small round head of Master Thomas Bardell was thrust out of the one pair window of a house with a red door, a few numbers off.

"Aggrawatin' thing," said the vixenish lady last mentioned, darting a withering glance at the heavy gentleman.

"My dear, it's not my fault," said the gentleman.

"Don't talk to me, you creetur. don't," retorted the lady. "The house with the red door, cabmin. Oh! if ever a woman was troubled with a ruffi'nly creetur, that takes a pride and pleasure in disgracing his wife on every possible occasion afore strangers, I am that woman!"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Raddle," said the other little woman, who was no other than Mrs. Cluppins.

"What have I been a-doing of?" asked Mr. Raddle.

"Don't talk to me, don't, you brute, for fear I should be perwoked to forgit my sect and strike you," said Mrs. Raddle.

While this dialogue was going on, the driver was most ignominiously leading the horse, by the bridle, up to the house with the red door, which Master Bardell had already opened. Here was a mean and low way of arriving at a friend's house! No dashing up, with all the fire and fury of the animal; no jumping down of the driver; no loud knocking at the door; no opening the apron with a crash at the very last moment, for fear of the ladies sitting in a draught; and then the man handing the shawls out, afterwards, as if he were a private coachman! The whole edge of the thing had been taken off — it was flatter than walking.

"Well, Tommy," said Mrs. Cluppins, "how's your poor dear mother?"

"Oh, she's wery well," replied Master Bardell. "She's in the front parlor, — all ready, I'm ready too, I am." Here Master Bardell put his hands in his pockets, and jumped off, and on the bottom step of the door.

"Is anybody else a-goin', Tommy?" said Mrs. Cluppins, arranging her pelerine.

"Mrs. Sanders is goin', she is," replied Tommy, "I'm goin' too, I am."

"Drat the boy," said little Mrs. Cluppins. "He thinks of nobody but himself. Here Tommy, dear."

"Well," said Master Bardell.

"Who else is a-goin', lovey?" said Mrs. Cluppins in an insinuating manner.

"Oh! Mrs. Rogers is a-goin'," replied Master Bardell, opening his eyes very wide as he delivered the intelligence.

"What! the lady as has taken the lodgings!" ejaculated Mrs. Cluppins.

Master Bardell put his hands deeper down into his pockets, and nodded exactly thirty-five times, to imply that it was the lady lodger, and no other.

"Bless us!" said Mrs. Cluppins. "It's quite a party."

"Ah, if you knew what was in the cupboard, you'd say so," replied Master Bardell.

"What is there, Tommy?" said Mrs. Cluppins, coaxingly. "You'll tell *me*, Tommy, I know."

"No, I won't," replied Master Bardell, shaking his head, and applying himself to the bottom step again.

"Drat the child!" muttered Mrs. Cluppins. "What a prowokin' little wretch it is! Come, Tommy, tell your dear Cluppy."

"Mother said I wasn't to," rejoined Master Bardell, "I'm a-goin' to have some, I am." Cheered by this prospect, the precocious boy applied himself to his infantile treadmill, with increased vigor.

The above examination of a child of tender years, took place while Mr. and Mrs. Raddle and the cab-driver were having an altercation concerning the fare: which terminating at this point in favor of the cabman, Mrs. Raddle came up tottering.

"Lauk, Mary Ann! what's the matter?" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"It's put me all over in such a tremble, Betsy," replied Mrs. Raddle. "Raddle a'n't like a man; he leaves everythink to me."

This was scarcely fair upon the unfortunate Mr. Raddle, who had been thrust aside by his good lady in the commencement of the dispute, and peremptorily commanded to hold his tongue. He had no opportunity of defending himself, however, for Mrs. Raddle gave unequivocal signs of fainting; which, being perceived from the parlor window, Mrs. Bardell, Mrs. Sanders, the lodger, and the lodger's servant, darted precipitately out, and conveyed her into the house: all talking at the same time, and giving utterance to various expressions of pity and condolence, as if she were one of the most suffering mortals on earth. Being conveyed into the front parlor, she was there deposited on a sofa; and the lady from the first floor running up *to* the first floor, returned with a bottle of sal volatile, which, holding Mrs. Raddle tight round the neck, she applied, in all womanly kindness and pity, to her nose, until that lady with many plunges and struggles was fain to declare herself decidedly better.

"Ah, poor thing!" said Mrs. Rogers, "I know what her feelin's is, too well."

"Ah, poor thing! so do I," said Mrs. Sanders: and then all the ladies moaned in unison, and said *they* knew what it was, and they pitied her from their hearts, they did. Even the lodger's little servant, who was thirteen years old, and three feet high, murmured her sympathy.

"But what's been the matter?" said Mrs. Bardell.

"Ah, what has decomposed you, ma'am?" inquired Mrs. Rogers.

"I have been a good deal flurried," replied Mrs. Raddle, in a reproachful manner. Thereupon the ladies cast indignant looks at Mr. Raddle.

"Why, the fact is," said that unhappy gentleman, stepping forward, "when we alighted at this door, a dispute

arose with the driver of the cabrioily"—— A loud scream from his wife, at the mention of this word, rendered all further explanation inaudible.

"You'd better leave us to bring her round, Raddle," said Mrs. Cluppins. "She'll never get better as long as you're here."

All the ladies concurred in this opinion; so Mr. Raddle was pushed out of the room, and requested to give himself an airing in the back yard, which he did, for about a quarter of an hour, when Mrs. Bardell announced to him, with a solemn face, that he might come in now, but that he must be very careful how he behaved towards his wife. She knew he didn't mean to be unkind; but Mary Ann was very far from strong, and if he didn't take care, he might lose her when he least expected it, which would be a very dreadful reflection for him afterwards; and so on. All this, Mr. Raddle heard with great submission, and presently returned to the parlor in a most lamb-like manner.

"Why, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am," said Mrs. Bardell, "you've never been introduced, I declare! Mr. Raddle, ma'am; Mrs. Cluppins, ma'am; Mrs. Raddle, ma'am."

——"Which is Mrs. Cluppins's sister," suggested Mrs. Sanders.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Rogers, graciously; for she was the lodger, and her servant was in waiting, so she was more gracious than intimate, in right of her position. "Oh, indeed!"

Mrs. Raddle smiled sweetly, Mr. Raddle bowed, and Mrs. Cluppins said, "she was sure she was very happy to have a opportunity of being known to a lady which she had heerd so much in faviour of, as Mrs. Rogers"—

a compliment which the last-named lady acknowledged with graceful condescension.

"Well, Mr. Raddle," said Mrs. Bardell; "I'm sure you ought to feel very much honored at you and Tommy being the only gentlemen to escort so many ladies all the way to the Spaniards' at Hampstead. Don't you think he ought, Mrs. Rogers, ma'am?"

"Oh, certainly, ma'am," replied Mrs. Rogers; after whom all the other ladies responded, "Oh, certainly."

"Of course I feel it, ma'am," said Mr. Raddle, rubbing his hands, and evincing a slight tendency to brighten up a little. "Indeed, to tell you the truth, I said, as we were coming along in the cabrioily" ——

At the recapitulation of the word which awakened so many painful recollections, Mrs. Raddle applied her handkerchief to her eyes again, and uttered a half-suppressed scream; so that Mrs. Bardell frowned upon Mr. Raddle, to intimate that he had better not say anything more; and desired Mrs. Rogers's servant, with an air, to "put the wine on."

This was the signal for displaying the hidden treasures of the closet, which comprised sundry plates of oranges and biscuits, and a bottle of old crusted port — that at one and nine — with another of the celebrated East India sherry at fourteen-pence, which were all produced in honor of the lodger, and afforded unlimited satisfaction to everybody. After great consternation had been excited in the mind of Mrs. Cluppins, by an attempt on the part of Tommy to recount how he had been cross-examined regarding the cupboard then in action, (which was fortunately nipped in the bud by his imbibing half a glass of the old crusted "the wrong way," and thereby endangering his life for some seconds,) the party walked

forth, in quest of a Hampstead stage. This was soon found, and in a couple of hours they all arrived safely in the Spaniards' Tea-gardens, where the luckless Mr. Raddle's very first act nearly occasioned his good lady a relapse: it being neither more nor less than to order tea for seven: whereas (as the ladies one and all remarked), what could have been easier than for Tommy to have drunk out of anybody's cup, or everybody's, if that was all, when the waiter wasn't looking: which would have saved one head of tea, and the tea just as good!

However, there was no help for it, and the tea-tray came, with seven cups and saucers, and bread and butter on the same scale. Mrs. Bardell was unanimously voted into the chair, and Mrs. Rogers being stationed on her right hand, and Mrs. Raddle on her left, the meal proceeded with great merriment and success.

"How sweet the country is, to-be-sure!" sighed Mrs. Rogers; "I almost wish I lived in it always."

"Oh, you wouldn't like that, ma'am," replied Mrs. Bardell, rather hastily; for it was not at all advisable, with reference to the lodgings, to encourage such notions; "you wouldn't like it, ma'am."

"Oh! I should think you was a deal too lively and sought-after, to be content with the country, ma'am," said little Mrs. Cluppins.

"Perhaps I am, ma'am. Perhaps I am," sighed the first-floor lodger.

"For lone people as have got nobody to care for them, or take care of them, or as have been hurt in their mind, or that kind of thing," observed Mr. Raddle, plucking up a little cheerfulness, and looking round, "the country is all very well. The country for a wounded spirit, they say."

Now, of all things in the world that the unfortunate man could have said, any would have been preferable to this. Of course Mrs. Bardell burst into tears, and requested to be led from the table instantly; upon which the affectionate child began to cry too, most dismally.

"Would anybody believe, ma'am," exclaimed Mrs. Raddle, turning fiercely to the first-floor lodger, "that a woman could be married to such a unmanly creetur, which can tamper with a woman's feelings as he does, every hour in the day, ma'am?"

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Raddle, "I didn't mean anything, my dear."

"You didn't mean!" repeated Mrs. Raddle, with great scorn and contempt. "Go away. I can't bear the sight on you, you brute."

"You must *not* flurry yourself, Mary Ann," interposed Mrs. Cluppins. "You really must consider yourself, my dear, which you never do. Now go away, Raddle, there's a good soul, or you'll only aggravate her."

"You had better take your tea by yourself, sir, indeed," said Mrs. Rogers, again applying the smelling-bottle.

Mrs. Sanders, who, according to custom, was very busy with the bread and butter, expressed the same opinion, and Mr. Raddle quietly retired.

After this, there was a great hoisting up of Master Bardell, who was rather a large size for hugging, into his mother's arms; in which operation he got his boots in the tea-board, and occasioned some confusion among the cups and saucers. But that description of fainting fits, which is contagious among ladies, seldom lasts long; so when he had been well kissed, and a little cried over,

Mrs. Bardell recovered, set him down again, wondered how she could have been so foolish, and poured out some more tea.

It was at this moment, that the sound of approaching wheels was heard, and that the ladies, looking up, saw a hackney-coach stop at the garden-gate.

"More company!" said Mrs. Sanders.

"It's a gentleman," said Mrs. Raddle.

"Well, if it a'n't Mr. Jackson, the young man from Dodson and Fogg's!" cried Mrs. Bardell. "Why, gracious! Surely Mr. Pickwick can't have paid the damages."

"Or hoffered marriage!" said Mrs. Cluppins.

"Dear me, how slow the gentleman is!" exclaimed Mrs. Rogers: "Why doesn't he make haste?"

As the lady spoke these words, Mr. Jackson turned from the coach where he had been addressing some observations to a shabby man in black leggins, who had just emerged from the vehicle, with a thick ash stick in his hand: and made his way to the place where the ladies were seated; winding his hair round the brim of his hat as he came along.

"Is anything the matter? Has anything taken place, Mr. Jackson?" said Mrs. Bardell, eagerly.

"Nothing whatever, ma'am," replied Mr. Jackson. "How de do, ladies? I have to ask pardon, ladies, for intruding — but the law, ladies — the law." With this apology Mr. Jackson smiled, made a comprehensive bow, and gave his hair another wind. Mrs. Rogers whispered Mrs. Raddle that he was really an elegant young man.

"I called in Goswell Street," resumed Jackson, "and hearing that you were here, from the slavey, took a coach

and came on. Our people want you down in the city directly, Mrs. Bardell."

"Lor!" ejaculated that lady, starting at the sudden nature of the communication.

"Yes," said Jackson, biting his lip. "It's very important and pressing business, which can't be postponed on any account. Indeed, Dodson expressly said so to me, and so did Fogg. I've kept the coach on purpose for you to go back in."

"How very strange!" exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

The ladies agreed that it *was* very strange, but were unanimously of opinion that it must be very important, or Dodson and Fogg would never have sent; and further, that the business being urgent, she ought to repair to Dodson and Fogg's without any delay.

There was a certain degree of pride and importance about being wanted by one's lawyers in such a monstrous hurry, that was by no means displeasing to Mrs. Bardell, especially as it might be reasonably supposed to enhance her consequence in the eyes of the first-floor lodger. She simpered a little, affected extreme vexation and hesitation, and at last arrived at the conclusion that she supposed she must go.

"But won't you refresh yourself after your walk, Mr. Jackson?" said Mrs. Bardell, persuasively.

"Why, really there a'n't much time to lose," replied Jackson; "and I've got a friend here," he continued, looking towards the man with the ash stick.

"Oh, ask your friend to come here, sir," said Mrs. Bardell. "Pray ask your friend here, sir."

"Why, thankee, I'd rather not," said Mr. Jackson, with some embarrassment of manner. "He's not much used to ladies' society, and it makes him bashful. If

you'll order the waiter to deliver him anything short, he won't drink it off at once, won't he! — only try him!" Mr. Jackson's fingers wandered playfully round his nose, at this portion of his discourse, to warn his hearers that he was speaking ironically.

The waiter was at once despatched to the bashful gentleman, and the bashful gentleman took something; Mr. Jackson also took something, and the ladies took something, for hospitality's sake. Mr. Jackson then said that he was afraid it was time to go; upon which, Mrs. Sanders, Mrs. Cluppins, and Tommy (who it was arranged should accompany Mrs. Bardell: leaving the others to Mr. Raddle's protection) got into the coach.

"Isaac," said Jackson, as Mrs. Bardell prepared to get in: looking up at the man with the ash stick, who was seated on the box, smoking a cigar.

"Well."

"*This* is Mrs. Bardell."

"Oh, I knowed that, long ago," said the man.

Mrs. Bardell got in, Mr. Jackson got in after her, and away they drove. Mrs. Bardell could not help ruminating on what Mr. Jackson's friend had said. Shrewd creatures, those lawyers: Lord bless us, how they find people out!

"Sad thing about these costs of our people's, a'n't it," said Jackson, when Mrs. Cluppins and Mrs. Sanders had fallen asleep; "your bill of costs, I mean?"

"I'm very sorry they can't get them," replied Mrs. Bardell. "But if you law-gentlemen do these things on speculation, why you must get a loss now and then, you know."

"You gave them a *cognovit* for the amount of your costs, after the trial, I'm told," said Jackson.

"Yes. Just as a matter of form," replied Mrs. Bardell.

"Certainly," replied Jackson, dryly. "Quite a matter of form. Quite."

On they drove, and Mrs. Bardell fell asleep. She was awakened, after some time, by the stopping of the coach.

"Bless us!" said the lady, "are we at Freeman's Court?"

"We're not going quite so far," replied Jackson. "Have the goodness to step out."

Mrs. Bardell, not yet thoroughly awake, complied. It was a curious place: — a large wall, with a gate in the middle, and a gas-light burning inside.

"Now, ladies," cried the man with the ash stick, looking into the coach, and shaking Mrs. Sanders to wake her, "Come!" Rousing her friend, Mrs. Sanders alighted. Mrs. Bardell, leaning on Jackson's arm, and leading Tommy by the hand, had already entered the porch. They followed.

The room they turned into, was even more odd-looking than the porch. Such a number of men standing about! And they stared so!

"What place is this?" inquired Mrs. Bardell, pausing.

"Only one of our public offices," replied Jackson, hurrying her through a door, and looking round to see that the other women were following. "Look sharp, Isaac!"

"Safe and sound," replied the man with the ash stick. The door swung heavily after them, and they descended a small flight of steps.

"Here we are, at last. All right and tight, Mrs. Bardell!" said Jackson, looking exultingly round.

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Bardell, with a palpitating heart.

"Just this," replied Jackson, drawing her a little on one side; "don't be frightened, Mrs. Bardell. There never was a more delicate man than Dodson, ma'am, or a more humane man than Fogg. It was their duty, in the way of business, to take you in execution for them costs; but they were anxious to spare your feelings as much as they could. What a comfort it must be, to you, to think how it's been done! This is the Fleet, ma'am. Wish you good-night, Mrs. Bardell. Good-night, Tommy!"

As Jackson hurried away in company with the man with the ash stick, another man, with a key in his hand, who had been looking on, led the bewildered female to a second short flight of steps, leading to a door-way. Mrs. Bardell screamed violently; Tommy roared; Mrs. Cluppins shrunk within herself; and Mrs. Sanders made off, without more ado. For, there, stood the injured Mr. Pickwick, taking his nightly allowance of air; and beside him leant Samuel Weller, who, seeing Mrs. Bardell, took his hat off, with mock reverence, while his master turned indignantly on his heel.

"Don't bother the woman," said the turnkey to Weller; "she's just come in."

"A pris'ner!" said Sam, quickly replacing his hat. "Who's the plaintives? What for? Speak up, old feller."

"Dodson and Fogg," replied the man; "execution on cognovit for costs."

"Here Job, Job!" shouted Sam, dashing into the passage, "run to Mr. Perker's, Job; *I* want him directly.

I see some good in this. Here's a game. Hooray! were's the gov'nor?"

But there was no reply to these inquiries, for Job had started furiously off, the instant he received his commission, and Mrs. Bardell had fainted, in real downright earnest.

CHAPTER XLVII.

IS CHIEFLY DEVOTED TO MATTERS OF BUSINESS, AND THE TEMPORAL ADVANTAGE OF DODSON AND FOGG. MR. WINKLE REAPPEARS UNDER EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES. MR. PICKWICK'S BENEVOLENCE PROVES STRONGER THAN HIS OBSTINACY.

Job Trotter, abating nothing of his speed, ran up Holborn: sometimes in the middle of the road, sometimes on the pavement, and sometimes in the gutter, as the chances of getting along, varied, with the press of men, women, children, and coaches, in each division of the thoroughfare: and, regardless of all obstacles, stopped not for an instant until he reached the gate of Gray's Inn. Notwithstanding all the expedition he had used, however, the gate had been closed a good half hour when he reached it, and by the time he had discovered Mr. Perker's laundress, who lived with a married daughter, who had bestowed her hand upon a non-resident waiter, who occupied the one-pair of some number, in some street, closely adjoining to some brewery, somewhere behind Gray's Inn Lane, it was within fifteen minutes of the time of closing the prison for the night. Mr. Lowten had still to be ferreted out from the back parlor of the Magpie and Stump; and Job had scarcely accomplished this object, and communicated Sam Weller's message, when the clock struck ten.

"There," said Lowten, "it's too late now. You can't get in to-night; you've got the key of the street, my friend."

"Never mind me," replied Job, "I can sleep anywhere. But won't it be better to see Mr. Perker to-night, so that we may be there, the first thing in the morning?"

"Why," responded Lowten, after a little consideration, "if it was in anybody else's case, Perker wouldn't be best pleased at my going up to his house; but as it's Mr. Pickwick's, I think I may venture to take a cab and charge it to the office." Deciding on this line of conduct, Mr. Lowten took up his hat, and begging the assembled company to appoint a deputy chairman during his temporary absence, led the way to the nearest coach-stand, and summoning the cab of most promising appearance, directed the driver to repair to Montague Place, Russell Square.

Mr. Perker had had a dinner-party that day, as was testified by the appearance of lights in the drawing-room windows, the sound of an improved grand piano, and an improvable cabinet voice issuing therefrom; and a rather overpowering smell of meat, which pervaded the steps and entry. In fact a couple of very good country agencies happening to come up to town, at the same time, an agreeable little party had been got together to meet them: comprising Mr. Snicks the Life Office Secretary, Mr. Prosee the eminent counsel, three solicitors, one commissioner of bankrupts, a special pleader from the Temple, a small-eyed peremptory young gentleman, his pupil, who had written a lively book about the law of demises, with a vast quantity of marginal notes and references; and several other eminent and distinguished

personages. From this society, little Mr. Perker detached himself, on his clerk being announced in a whisper; and repairing to the dining-room, there found Mr. Lowten and Job Trotter looking very dim and shadowy by the light of a kitchen candle, which the gentleman who condescended to appear in plush shorts and cottons for a quarterly stipend, had, with a becoming contempt for the clerk and all things appertaining to "the office," placed upon the table.

"Now, Lowten," said little Mr. Perker, shutting the door, "what's the matter? No important letter come in a parcel, is there?"

"No, sir," replied Lowten. "This is a messenger from Mr. Pickwick, sir."

"From Pickwick, eh?" said the little man, turning quickly to Job. "Well; what is it?"

"Dodson and Fogg have taken Mrs. Bardell in execution for her costs, sir," said Job.

"No!" exclaimed Perker, putting his hands in his pockets, and reclining against the sideboard.

"Yes," said Job. "It seems they got a cognovit out of her, for the amount of 'em, directly after the trial."

"By Jove!" said Perker, taking both hands out of his pockets, and striking the knuckles of his right against the palm of his left, emphatically, "those are the cleverest scamps I ever had anything to do with!"

"The sharpest practitioners *I* ever knew, sir," observed Lowten.

"Sharp!" echoed Perker. "There's no knowing where to have them."

"Very true, sir, there is not," replied Lowten; and then, both master and man pondered for a few seconds, with animated countenances, as if they were reflecting

upon one of the most beautiful and ingenious discoveries that the intellect of man had ever made. When they had in some measure recovered from their trance of admiration, Job Trotter discharged himself of the rest of his commission. Perker nodded his head thoughtfully, and pulled out his watch.

"At ten precisely, I will be there," said the little man. "Sam is quite right. Tell him so. Will you take a glass of wine, Lowten?"

"No, thank you, sir."

"You mean yes, I think," said the little man, turning to the sideboard for a decanter and glasses.

As Lowten *did* mean yes, he said no more on the subject, but inquired of Job, in an audible whisper, whether the portrait of Perker, which hung opposite the fireplace, wasn't a wonderful likeness: to which, Job of course replied that it was. The wine being by this time poured out, Lowten drank to Mrs. Perker and the children, and Job to Perker. The gentleman in the plush shorts and cottons considering it no part of his duty to show the people from the office out, consistently declined to answer the bell, and they showed themselves out. The attorney betook himself to his drawing-room, the clerk to the Magpie and Stump, and Job to Covent Garden Market to spend the night in a vegetable-basket.

Punctually at the appointed hour next morning, the good-humored little attorney tapped at Mr. Pickwick's door, which was opened, with great alacrity, by Sam Weller.

"Mr. Perker, sir," said Sam, announcing the visitor to Mr. Pickwick, who was sitting at the window in a thoughtful attitude. "Wery glad you've looked in accidentally, sir. I rayther think the gov'ner wants to have a vord and a half with you, sir."

Perker bestowed a look of intelligence on Sam, intimating that he understood he was not to say he had been sent for: and beckoning him to approach, whispered briefly in his ear.

"You don't mean that 'ere, sir?" said Sam, starting back in excessive surprise.

Perker nodded and smiled.

Mr. Samuel Weller looked at the little lawyer, then at Mr. Pickwick, then at the ceiling, then at Perker again; grinned, laughed outright, and finally, catching up his hat from the carpet, without further explanation, disappeared.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Perker with astonishment. "What has put Sam into this most extraordinary state?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," replied Perker. "Come, my dear sir, draw up your chair to the table. I have a good deal to say to you."

"What papers are those?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, as the little man deposited on the table a small bundle of documents tied with red tape.

"The papers in Bardell and Pickwick," replied Perker, undoing the knot with his teeth.

Mr. Pickwick grated the legs of his chair against the ground; and throwing himself into it, folded his hands and looked sternly — if Mr. Pickwick ever could look sternly — at his legal friend.

"You don't like to hear the name of the cause?" said the little man, still busying himself with the knot.

"No, I do not indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Sorry for that," resumed Perker, "because it will form the subject of our conversation."

"I would rather that the subject should be never

mentioned between us, Perker," interposed Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"Pooh pooh, my dear sir," said the little man, untying the bundle, and glancing eagerly at Mr. Pickwick out of the corners of his eyes. "It must be mentioned. I have come here on purpose. Now, are you ready to hear what I have to say, my dear sir? No hurry; if you are not, I can wait. I have this morning's paper here. Your time shall be mine. There!" Hereupon, the little man threw one leg over the other and made a show of beginning to read, with great composure and application.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, with a sigh, but softening into a smile at the same time. "Say what you have to say; it's the old story I suppose?"

"With a difference, my dear sir; with a difference," rejoined Perker, deliberately folding up the paper and putting it into his pocket again. "Mrs. Bardell, the plaintiff in the action, is within these walls, sir."

"I know it," was Mr. Pickwick's reply.

"Very good," retorted Perker. "And you know how she comes here, I suppose; I mean on what grounds, and at whose suit?"

"Yes; at least I have heard Sam's account of the matter," said Mr. Pickwick, with affected carelessness.

"Sam's account of the matter," replied Perker, "is, I will venture to say, a perfectly correct one. Well now, my dear sir, the first question I have to ask, is, whether this woman is to remain here?"

"To remain here!" echoed Mr. Pickwick.

"To remain here, my dear sir," rejoined Perker, leaning back in his chair and looking steadily at his client.

"How can you ask me?" said that gentleman. "It

rests with Dodson and Fogg; you know that, very well."

"I know nothing of the kind," retorted Perker, firmly. "It does *not* rest with Dodson and Fogg; you know the men, my dear sir, as well as I do. It rests solely, wholly, and entirely with you."

"With me!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, rising nervously from his chair, and reseating himself directly afterwards.

The little man gave a double knock on the lid of his snuff-box, opened it, took a great pinch, shut it up again, and repeated the words, "With you."

"I say, my dear sir," pursued the little man, who seemed to gather confidence from the snuff; "I say, that her speedy liberation or perpetual imprisonment rests with you, and with you alone. Hear me out, my dear sir, if you please, and do not be so very energetic, for it will only put you into a perspiration and do no good whatever. I say," continued Perker, checking off each position on a different finger, as he laid it down; "I say that nobody but you can rescue her from this den of wretchedness; and that you can only do that, by paying the costs of this suit — both of plaintiff and defendant — into the hands of these Freeman's Court sharks. Now, pray be quiet, my dear sir."

Mr. Pickwick, whose face had been undergoing most surprising changes during this speech, and who was evidently on the verge of a strong burst of indignation, calmed his wrath as well as he could. Perker, strengthening his argumentative powers with another pinch of snuff, proceeded.

"I have seen the woman, this morning. By paying the costs, you can obtain a full release and discharge

from the damages; and further — this I know is a far greater object of consideration with you, my dear sir — a voluntary statement, under her hand, in the form of a letter to me, that this business was, from the very first, fomented, and encouraged, and brought about, by these men, Dodson and Fogg; that she deeply regrets ever having been the instrument of annoyance or injury to you; and that she entreats me to intercede with you, and implore your pardon."

"If I pay her costs for her," said Mr. Pickwick, indignantly. "A valuable document indeed!"

"No '*if*' in the case, my dear sir," said Perker, triumphantly. "There is the very letter I speak of. Brought to my office by another woman at nine o'clock this morning, before I had set foot in this place, or held any communication with Mrs. Bardell, upon my honor." Selecting the letter from the bundle, the little lawyer laid it at Mr. Pickwick's elbow, and took snuff for two consecutive minutes, without winking.

"Is this all you have to say to me?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, mildly.

"Not quite," replied Perker. "I cannot undertake to say, at this moment, whether the wording of the cognovit, the nature of the ostensible consideration, and the proof we can get together about the whole conduct of the suit, will be sufficient to justify an indictment for conspiracy. I fear not, my dear sir; they are too clever for that, I doubt. I do mean to say, however, that the whole facts, taken together, will be sufficient to justify you, in the minds of all reasonable men. And now, my dear sir, I put it to you. This one hundred and fifty pounds, or whatever it may be — take it in round numbers — is nothing to you. A jury has decided against

you; well, their verdict is wrong, but still they decided as they thought right, and it *is* against you. You have now an opportunity, on easy terms, of placing yourself in a much higher position than you ever could, by remaining here; which would only be imputed, by people who didn't know you, to sheer, dogged, wrong-headed, brutal obstinacy: nothing else, my dear sir, believe me. Can you hesitate to avail yourself of it, when it restores you to your friends, your old pursuits, your health and amusements; when it liberates your faithful and attached servant, whom you otherwise doom to imprisonment for the whole of your life? and above all, when it enables you to take the very magnanimous revenge — which I know, my dear sir, is one after your own heart — of releasing this woman from a scene of misery and debauchery, to which no man should ever be consigned, if I had my will, but the infliction of which, on any woman, is perhaps even more frightful and barbarous. Now I ask you, my dear sir, not only as your legal adviser, but as your very true friend, will you let slip the occasion of attaining all these objects, and doing all this good, for the paltry consideration of a few pounds finding their way into the pockets of a couple of rascals, to whom it makes no manner of difference, except that the more they gain, the more they'll seek, and so the sooner be led into some piece of knavery that must end in a crash? I have put these considerations to you, my dear sir, very feebly and imperfectly, but I ask you to think of them — turn them over in your mind as long as you please: I wait here most patiently for your answer."

Before Mr. Pickwick could reply; before Mr. Perker had taken one twentieth part of the snuff with which so unusually long an address imperatively required to be

followed up; there was a low murmuring of voices outside, and then a hesitating knock at the door.

"Dear, dear," exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, who had been evidently roused by his friend's appeal; "what an annoyance that door is! Who is that?"

"Me, sir," replied Sam Weller, putting in his head.

"I can't speak to you just now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "I am engaged, at this moment, Sam."

"Beg your pardon, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller. "But here's a lady here, sir, as says she's somethin' wery partickler to disclose."

"I can't see any lady," replied Mr. Pickwick, whose mind was filled with visions of Mrs. Bardell.

"I vouldn't make too sure o' that, sir," urged Mr. Weller, shaking his head. "If you know'd who was near, sir, I rayther think you'd change your note; as the hawk remarked to himself, with a cheerful laugh, ven he heerd the robin redbreast a-singin' round the corner."

"Who is it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Will you see her, sir?" asked Mr. Weller, holding the door in his hand, as if he had some curious live animal on the other side.

"I suppose I must," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at Perker.

"Well then, all in to begin!" cried Sam. "Sound the gong, draw up the curtain, and enter the two conspirators."

As Sam Weller spoke, he threw the door open, and there rushed tumultuously into the room, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle: leading after him, by the hand, the identical young lady who, at Dingley Dell, had worn the boots with the fur round the tops; and who, now a very pleasing compound of blushes and confusion, and lilac silk,

and a smart bonnet, and a rich lace veil, looked prettier than ever.

"Miss Arabella Allen!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, rising from his chair.

"No," replied Mr. Winkle, dropping on his knees, "Mrs. Winkle. Pardon, my dear friend, pardon!"

Mr. Pickwick could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses, and perhaps would not have done so, but for the corroborative testimony afforded by the smiling countenance of Perker, and the bodily presence, in the background, of Sam and the pretty housemaid: who appeared to contemplate the proceedings with the liveliest satisfaction.

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick," said Arabella, in a low voice, as if alarmed at the silence, "can you forgive my imprudence?"

Mr. Pickwick returned no verbal response to this appeal; but he took off his spectacles in great haste, and seizing both the young lady's hands in his, kissed her a great number of times — perhaps a greater number than was absolutely necessary — and then, still retaining one of her hands, told Mr. Winkle he was an audacious young dog, and bade him get up: which Mr. Winkle, who had been, for some seconds, scratching his nose with the brim of his hat, in a penitent manner, did; whereupon Mr. Pickwick slapped him on the back several times, and then shook hands heartily with Perker, who, not to be behindhand in the compliments of the occasion, saluted both the bride and the pretty housemaid with right good-will, and having wrung Mr. Winkle's hand most cordially, wound up his demonstrations of joy, by taking snuff enough to set any half dozen men, with ordinarily constructed noses, a-sneezing for life.

"Why, my dear girl," said Mr. Pickwick, "how has all this come about? Come, sit down, and let me hear it all. How well she looks, doesn't she, Perker?" added Mr. Pickwick, surveying Arabella's face with a look of as much pride and exultation as if she had been his daughter.

"Delightful, my dear sir," replied the little man. "If I were not a married man myself, I should be disposed to envy you, you dog." Thus expressing himself, the little lawyer gave Mr. Winkle a poke in the chest, which that gentleman reciprocated; after which they both laughed very loudly, but not so loudly as Mr. Samuel Weller: who had just relieved his feelings by kissing the pretty housemaid, under cover of the cupboard-door.

"I can never be grateful enough to you, Sam, I am sure," said Arabella, with the sweetest smile imaginable. "I shall not forget your exertions in the garden at Clifton."

"Don't say nothin' wotever about it, ma'am," replied Sam. "I only assisted natur', ma'am; as the doctor said to the boy's mother, arter he'd bled him to death."

"Mary, my dear, sit down," said Mr. Pickwick, cutting short these compliments. "Now then — how long have you been married, eh?"

Arabella looked bashfully at her lord and master, who replied, "Only three days."

"Only three days, eh?" said Mr. Pickwick. "Why, what have you been doing these three months?"

"Ah, to be sure," interposed Perker; "come! Account for this idleness. You see Pickwick's only astonishment is, that it wasn't all over months ago."

"Why the fact is," replied Mr. Winkle, looking at his blushing young wife, "that I could not persuade Bella to

run away, for a long time; and when I had persuaded her, it was a long time more, before we could find an opportunity. Mary had to give a month's warning too, before she could leave her place next door, and we couldn't possibly have done it without her assistance."

"Upon my word," exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, who by this time had resumed his spectacles, and was looking from Arabella to Winkle, and from Winkle to Arabella, with as much delight depicted in his countenance as warm-heartedness and kindly feeling can communicate to the human face — "upon my word! you seem to have been very systematic in your proceedings. And is your brother acquainted with all this, my dear?"

"Oh, no, no," replied Arabella, changing color. "Dear Mr. Pickwick, he must only know it from you — from your lips alone. He is so violent, so prejudiced, and has been so — so anxious in behalf of his friend, Mr. Sawyer," added Arabella, looking down, "that I fear the consequences dreadfully."

"Ah, to be sure," said Perker, gravely. "You must take this matter in hand for them, my dear sir. These young men will respect you, when they would listen to nobody else. You must prevent mischief, my dear sir. Hot blood — hot blood." And the little man took a warning pinch, and shook his head, doubtfully.

"You forget, my love," said Mr. Pickwick, gently, "you forget that I am a prisoner."

"No, indeed I do not, my dear sir," replied Arabella. "I never have forgotten it: I have never ceased to think how great your sufferings must have been in this shocking place; but I hoped that what no consideration for yourself would induce you to do, a regard to our happiness, might. If my brother hears of this, first, from you, I

feel certain we shall be reconciled. He is my only relation in the world, Mr. Pickwick, and unless you plead for me, I fear I have lost even him. I have done wrong —very, very wrong, I know." Here poor Arabella hid her face in her handkerchief, and wept bitterly.

Mr. Pickwick's nature was a good deal worked upon, by these same tears; but when Mrs. Winkle, drying her eyes, took to coaxing and entreating in the sweetest tones of a very sweet voice, he became particularly restless, and evidently undecided how to act, as was evinced by sundry nervous rubbings of his spectacle-glasses, nose, tights, head, and gaiters.

Taking advantage of these symptoms of indecision, Mr. Perker (to whom, it appeared, the young couple had driven straight that morning) urged, with legal point and shrewdness, that Mr. Winkle, senior, was still unacquainted with the important rise in life's flight of steps which his son had taken; that the future expectations of the said son depended entirely upon the said Winkle, senior, continuing to regard him with undiminished feelings of affection and attachment, which it was very unlikely he would, if this great event were long kept a secret from him; that Mr. Pickwick repairing to Bristol to seek Mr. Allen, might, with equal reason, repair to Birmingham to seek Mr. Winkle, senior; lastly, that Mr. Winkle, senior, had good right and title to consider Mr. Pickwick as in some degree the guardian and adviser of his son, and that it consequently behooved that gentleman, and was indeed due to his personal character, to acquaint the aforesaid Winkle, senior, personally, and by word of mouth, with the whole circumstances of the case, and with the share he had taken in the transaction.

Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass arrived, most oppor-

tunely, in this stage of the pleadings, and as it was necessary to explain to them all that had occurred, together with the various reasons pro and con., the whole of the arguments were gone over again, after which everybody urged every argument in his own way, and at his own length. And, at last, Mr. Pickwick, fairly argued and remonstrated out of all his resolutions, and being in imminent danger of being argued and remonstrated out of his wits, caught Arabella in his arms, and declaring that she was a very amiable creature, and that he didn't know how it was, but he had always been very fond of her, from the first, said he could never find it in his heart to stand in the way of young people's happiness, and they might do with him as they pleased.

Mr. Weller's first act, on hearing this concession, was to despatch Job Trotter to the illustrious Mr. Pell, with an authority to deliver to the bearer the formal discharge which his prudent parent had had the foresight to leave in the hands of that learned gentleman, in case it should be, at any time, required on an emergency; his next proceeding was to invest his whole stock of ready money, in the purchase of five-and-twenty gallons of mild porter: which he himself dispensed on the racket ground to everybody who would partake of it; this done, he hurra'd in divers parts of the building until he lost his voice, and then quietly relapsed into his usual collected and philosophical condition.

At three o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Pickwick took a last look at his little room, and made his way, as well as he could, through the throng of debtors who pressed eagerly forward to shake him by the hand, until he reached the lodge steps. He turned, here, to look about him, and his eye lightened as he did so. In all the crowd of wan,

emaciated faces, he saw not one which was not the happier for his sympathy and charity.

"Perker," said Mr. Pickwick, beckoning one young man towards him, "this is Mr. Jingle, whom I spoke to you about."

"Very good, my dear sir," replied Perker, looking hard at Jingle. "You will see me again, young man, to-morrow. I hope you may live to remember and feel deeply what I shall have to communicate, sir."

Jingle bowed respectfully, trembled very much as he took Mr. Pickwick's proffered hand, and withdrew.

"Job you know, I think?" said Mr. Pickwick, presenting that gentleman.

"I know the rascal," replied Perker, good-humoredly. "See after your friend, and be in the way to-morrow at one. Do you hear? Now, is there anything more?"

"Nothing," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "You have delivered the little parcel I gave you for your old landlord, Sam?"

"I have, sir," replied Sam. "He bu'st out a-cryin', sir, and said you wos wery gen'rous and thoughtful, and he only wished you could have him innockilated for a gallopin' consumption, for his old friend as had lived here so long, wos dead, and he'd noweres to look for another."

"Poor fellow, poor fellow!" said Mr. Pickwick. "God bless you, my friends!"

As Mr. Pickwick uttered this adieu, the crowd raised a loud shout. Many among them were pressing forward to shake him by the hand, again, when he drew his arm through Perker's, and hurried from the prison: far more sad and melancholy for the moment, than when he had first entered it. Alas! how many sad and unhappy be-

ings had he left behind! and how many of them lie caged there, still!

A happy evening was that for, at least, one party in the George and Vulture; and light and cheerful were two of the hearts that emerged from its hospitable door next morning. The owners thereof, were Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, the former of whom was speedily deposited inside a comfortable post-coach, with a little dickey behind, in which the latter mounted with great agility.

"Sir," called out Mr. Weller, to his master.

"Well, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, thrusting his head out of the window.

"I wish them horses had been three months and better in the Fleet, sir."

"Why, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Wy, sir," exclaimed Mr. Weller, rubbing his hands, "how they would go if they had been!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

RELATES HOW MR. PICKWICK, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF SAMUEL WELLER, ESSAYED TO SOFTEN THE HEART OF MR. BENJAMIN ALLEN, AND TO MOLLIFY THE WRATH OF MR. ROBERT SAWYER.

Mr. Ben Allen and Mr. Bob Sawyer sat together in the little surgery behind the shop, discussing minced veal and future prospects, when the discourse, not unnaturally, turned upon the practice acquired by Bob the aforesaid, and his present chances of deriving a competent independence from the honorable profession to which he had devoted himself.

— "Which, I think," observed Mr. Bob Sawyer, pursuing the thread of the subject, "which I think, Ben, are rather dubious."

"What's rather dubious?" inquired Mr. Ben Allen, at the same time sharpening his intellects with a draught of beer. "What's dubious?"

"Why, the chances," responded Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"I forgot," said Mr. Ben Allen. "The beer has reminded me that I forgot, Bob — yes; they *are* dubious."

"It's wonderful how the poor people patronize me," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, reflectively. "They knock me up, at all hours of the night; they take medicine to an extent which I should have conceived impossible; they

put on blisters and leeches with a perseverance worthy of a better cause ; they make additions to their families, in a manner which is quite awful. Six of those last-named little promissory notes, all due on the same day, Ben, and all intrusted to me ! "

" It's very gratifying, isn't it ? " said Mr. Ben Allen holding his plate for some more minced veal.

" Oh, very," replied Bob ; " only not quite so much so, as the confidence of patients, with a shilling or two to spare, would be. This business was capitally described in the advertisement, Ben. It is a practice, a very extensive practice — and that's all."

" Bob," said Mr. Ben Allen, laying down his knife and fork, and fixing his eyes on the visage of his friend : " Bob, I'll tell you what it is."

" What is it ? " inquired Mr. Bob Sawyer.

" You must make yourself, with as little delay as possible, master of Arabella's one thousand pounds."

" Three per cent. consolidated Bank annuities, now standing in her name in the book or books of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England," added Bob Sawyer, in legal phraseology.

" Exactly so," said Ben. " She has it when she comes of age, or marries. She wants a year of coming of age, and if you plucked up a spirit she needn't want a month of being married."

" She's a very charming and delightful creature," quoth Mr. Robert Sawyer, in reply ; " and has only one fault that I know of, Ben. It happens, unfortunately, that that single blemish is a want of taste. She don't like me."

" It's my opinion that she don't know what she does like," said Mr. Ben Allen, contemptuously.

"Perhaps not," remarked Mr. Bob Sawyer. "But it's my opinion that she does know what she doesn't like, and that's of more importance."

"I wish," said Mr. Ben Allen, setting his teeth together, and speaking more like a savage warrior who fed on raw wolf's flesh which he carved with his fingers, than a peaceable young gentleman who eat minced veal with a knife and fork, "I wish I knew whether any rascal really has been tampering with her, and attempting to engage her affections. I think I should assassinate him, Bob."

"I'd put a bullet in him, if I found him out," said Mr. Sawyer, stopping in the course of a long draught of beer, and looking malignantly out of the porter-pot. "If that didn't do his business, I'd extract it afterwards, and kill him that way."

Mr. Benjamin Allen gazed abstractedly on his friend for some minutes in silence, and then said —

"You have never proposed to her, point-blank, Bob?"

"No. Because I saw it would be of no use," replied Mr. Robert Sawyer.

"You shall do it, before you are twenty-four hours older," retorted Ben, with desperate calmness. "She *shall* have you, or I'll know the reason why, I'll exert my authority."

"Well," said Mr. Bob Sawyer, "we shall see."

"We *shall* see, my friend," replied Mr. Ben Allen, fiercely. He paused for a few seconds, and added in a voice broken by emotion, "You have loved her from a child, my friend — you loved her when we were boys at school together, and even then, she was wayward, and slighted your young feelings. Do you recollect, with all the eagerness of a child's love, one day pressing upon

her acceptance, two small caraway-seed biscuits and one sweet apple, neatly folded into a circular parcel with the leaf of a copy-book?"

"I do," replied Bob Sawyer.

"She slighted that, I think?" said Ben Allen.

"She did," rejoined Bob. "She said I had kept the parcel so long in the pockets of my corduroys, that the apple was unpleasantly warm."

"I remember," said Mr. Allen, gloomily. "Upon which we ate it ourselves, in alternate bites."

Bob Sawyer intimated his recollection of the circumstance last alluded to, by a melancholy frown; and the two friends remained for some time absorbed, each in his own meditations.

While these observations were being exchanged between Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen: and while the boy in the gray livery, marvelling at the unwonted prolongation of the dinner, cast an anxious look, from time to time, towards the glass door, distracted by inward misgivings regarding the amount of minced veal which would be ultimately reserved for his individual cravings; there rolled soberly on, through the streets of Bristol, a private fly, painted of a sad green color, drawn by a chubby sort of brown horse, and driven by a surly-looking man with his legs dressed like the legs of a groom, and his body attired in the coat of a coachman. Such appearances are common to many vehicles belonging to, and maintained by, old ladies of economical habits; and in this vehicle, sat an old lady who was its mistress and proprietor.

"Martin!" said the old lady calling to the surly man, out of the front window.

"Well?" said the surly man, touching his hat to the old lady.

"Mr. Sawyer's," said the old lady.

"I was going there," said the surly man.

The old lady nodded the satisfaction which this proof of the surly man's foresight imparted to her feelings; and the surly man giving a smart lash to the chubby horse, they all repaired to Mr. Bob Sawyer's together.

"Martin!" said the old lady, when the fly stopped at the door of Mr. Robert Sawyer late Nockemorf.

"Well?" said Martin.

"Ask the lad to step out, and mind the horse."

"I'm going to mind the horse myself," said Martin, laying his whip on the roof of the fly.

"I can't permit it, on any account," said the old lady; "your testimony will be very important, and I must take you into the house with me. You must not stir from my side during the whole interview. Do you hear?"

"I hear," replied Martin.

"Well; what are you stopping for?"

"Nothing," replied Martin. So saying, the surly man leisurely descended from the wheel, on which he had been poising himself on the tops of the toes of his right foot, and having summoned the boy in the gray livery, opened the coach-door, flung down the steps, and thrusting in a hand enveloped in a dark wash-leather glove, pulled out the old lady with as much unconcern in his manner as if she were a bandbox.

"Dear me," exclaimed the old lady, "I am so flurried, now I have got here, Martin, that I'm all in a tremble."

Mr. Martin coughed behind the dark wash-leather glove, but expressed no sympathy; so the old lady, composing herself, trotted up Mr. Bob Sawyer's steps, and Mr. Martin followed. Immediately upon the old lady's

entering the shop, Mr. Benjamin Allen and Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been putting the spirits and water out of sight, and upsetting nauseous drugs to take off the smell of the tobacco-smoke, issued hastily forth in a transport of pleasure and affection.

"My dear aunt," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, "how kind of you to look in upon us! Mr. Sawyer, aunt; my friend Mr. Bob Sawyer that I have spoken to you about, regarding — you know, aunt." And here Mr. Ben Allen, who was not at the moment extraordinarily sober, added the word "Arabella," in what was meant to be a whisper, but which was, in fact, an especially audible and distinct tone of speech, which nobody could avoid hearing, if anybody were so disposed.

"My dear Benjamin," said the old lady, struggling with a great shortness of breath, and trembling from head to foot — "don't be alarmed, my dear, but I think I had better speak to Mr. Sawyer, alone, for a moment — only for one moment."

"Bob," said Mr. Ben Allen, "will you take my aunt into the surgery?"

"Certainly," responded Bob, in a most professional voice. "Step this way, my dear ma'am. Don't be frightened, ma'am. We shall be able to set you to rights in a very short time, I have no doubt, ma'am. Here, my dear ma'am. Now then!" With this, Mr. Bob Sawyer having handed the old lady to a chair, shut the door, drew another chair close to her, and waited to hear detailed, the symptoms of some disorder from which he saw in perspective a long train of profits and advantages.

The first thing the old lady did, was to shake her head a great many times, and begin to cry.

"Nervous," said Bob Sawyer complacently. "Camphor-julep and water three times a-day, and composing draught at night."

"I don't know how to begin, Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady. "It is so very painful and distressing."

"You need not begin, ma'am," rejoined Mr. Bob Sawyer. "I can anticipate all you would say. The head is in fault."

"I should be very sorry to think it was the heart," said the old lady, with a slight groan.

"Not the slightest danger of that, ma'am," replied Bob Sawyer. "The stomach is the primary cause."

"Mr. Sawyer!" exclaimed the old lady, starting.

"Not the least doubt of it, ma'am," rejoined Bob, looking wondrous wise. "Medicine, in time, my dear ma'am, would have prevented it all."

"Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady, more flurried than before, "this conduct is either great impertinence to one in my situation, sir, or it arises from your not understanding the object of my visit. If it had been in the power of medicine, or any foresight I could have used, to prevent what has occurred, I should certainly have done so. I had better see my nephew at once," said the old lady, twirling her reticule indignantly, and rising as she spoke.

"Stop a moment, ma'am," said Bob Sawyer; 'I am afraid I have not understood you. What *is* the matter, ma'am?"

"My niece, Mr. Sawyer," said the old lady — "your friend's sister."

"Yes, ma'am," said Bob, all impatience; for the old lady, although much agitated, spoke with the most tantalizing deliberation, as old ladies often do. "Yes, ma'am?"

"Left my home, Mr. Sawyer, three days ago, on a pretended visit to my sister, another aunt of hers, who keeps the large boarding-school just beyond the third mile-stone, where there is a very large laburnum tree and an oak-gate," said the old lady, stopping in this place to dry her eyes.

"Oh, devil take the laburnum tree! ma'am," said Bob, quite forgetting his professional dignity in his anxiety. "Get on a little faster; put a little more steam on, ma'am, pray."

"This morning," said the old lady, slowly, "this morning, she" ——

"She came back, ma'am, I suppose," said Bob, with great animation. "Did she come back?"

"No, she did not — she wrote," replied the old lady.

"What did she say?" inquired Bob, eagerly.

"She said, Mr. Sawyer," replied the old lady — "and it is this, I want you to prepare Benjamin's mind for, gently and by degrees; she said that she was — I have got the letter in my pocket, Mr. Sawyer, but my glasses are in the carriage, and I should only waste your time if I attempted to point out the passage to you, without them; she said, in short, Mr. Sawyer, that she was married."

"What!" said, or rather shouted, Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"Married," repeated the old lady.

Mr. Bob Sawyer stopped to hear no more; but darting from the surgery into the outer shop, cried in a stentorian voice, "Ben, my boy, she's bolted!"

Mr. Ben Allen, who had been slumbering behind the counter, with his head half a foot or so below his knees, no sooner heard this appalling communication, than he made a precipitate rush at Mr. Martin, and twisting his

hand in the neckcloth of that taciturn servitor, expressed an intention of choking him where he stood: which intention, with a promptitude often the effect of desperation, he at once commenced carrying into execution, with much vigor and surgical skill.

Mr. Martin, who was a man of few words, and possessed but little power of eloquence or persuasion, submitted to this operation with a very calm and agreeable expression of countenance, for some seconds; finding, however, that it threatened speedily to lead to a result which would place it beyond his power to claim any wages, board or otherwise, in all time to come, he muttered an inarticulate remonstrance, and felled Mr. Benjamin Allen to the ground. As that gentleman had his hands entangled in his cravat, he had no alternative but to follow him to the floor. There they both lay struggling, when the shop-door opened, and the party was increased by the arrival of two most unexpected visitors: to wit, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Samuel Weller.

The impression at once produced upon Mr. Weller's mind by what he saw, was, that Mr. Martin was hired by the establishment of Sawyer late Nockemorf, to take strong medicine, or to go into fits and be experimentalized upon, or to swallow poison now and then with the view of testing the efficacy of some new antidotes, or to do something or other to promote the great science of medicine, and gratify the ardent spirit of inquiry burning in the bosoms of its two young professors. So, without presuming to interfere, Sam stood perfectly still, and looked on, as if he were mightily interested in the result of the then pending experiment. Not so, Mr. Pickwick. He at once threw himself on the astonished combatants, with his accustomed energy, and loudly called upon the by-standers to interpose.

This roused Mr. Bob Sawyer, who had been hitherto quite paralyzed by the frenzy of his companion; and with that gentleman's assistance, Mr. Pickwick raised Ben Allen to his feet. Mr. Martin, finding himself alone on the floor, got up, and looked about him.

"Mr. Allen," said Mr. Pickwick, "what is the matter, sir?"

"Never mind, sir!" replied Mr. Allen, with haughty defiance.

"What is it?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, looking at Bob Sawyer. "Is he unwell?"

Before Bob could reply, Mr. Ben Allen seized Mr. Pickwick by the hand, and murmured, in sorrowful accents, "My sister, my dear sir; my sister."

"Oh, is that all!" said Mr. Pickwick. "We shall easily arrange that matter, I hope. Your sister is safe and well, and I am here, my dear sir, to" ——

"Sorry to do anythin' as may cause an interruption to such wery pleasant proceedin's, as the king said wen he dissolved the parliament," interposed Mr. Weller, who had been peeping through the glass door; "but there's another experiment here, sir. Here's a wenerable old lady a-lyin' on the carpet waitin' for dissection, or galwinism, or some other rewivin' and scientific inwention."

"I forgot," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen. "It is my aunt."

"Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick. "Poor lady! gently Sam, gently."

"Strange sitivation for one o' the family," observed Sam Weller, hoisting the aunt into a chair. "Now, depitty Sawbones, bring out the wollatilly!"

The latter observation was addressed to the boy in

gray, who, having handed over the fly to the care of the street-keeper, had come back to see what all the noise was about. Between the boy in gray, and Mr. Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Benjamin Allen (who having frightened his aunt into a fainting fit, was affectionately solicitous for her recovery), the old lady was at length restored to consciousness; then Mr. Ben Allen, turning with a puzzled countenance to Mr. Pickwick, asked him what he was about to say, when he had been so alarmingly interrupted.

"We are all friends here, I presume?" said Mr. Pickwick, clearing his voice, and looking towards the man of few words with the surly countenance, who drove the fly with the chubby horse.

This reminded Mr. Bob Sawyer that the boy in gray was looking on, with eyes wide open, and greedy ears. The incipient chemist having been lifted up by his coat-collar, and dropped outside the door, Bob Sawyer assured Mr. Pickwick that he might speak without reserve.

"Your sister, my dear sir," said Mr. Pickwick, turning to Benjamin Allen, "is in London; well and happy."

"Her happiness is no object to me, sir," said Mr. Benjamin Allen, with a flourish of the hand.

"Her husband *is* an object to *me*, sir," said Bob Sawyer. "He shall be an object to me, sir, at twelve paces, and a very pretty object I'll make of him, sir — a mean-spirited scoundrel!" This, as it stood, was a very pretty denunciation, and magnanimous withal; but Mr. Bob Sawyer rather weakened its effect, by winding up with some general observations concerning the punching of heads and knocking out of eyes, which were commonplace by comparison.

"Stay, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; "before you apply those epithets to the gentleman in question, consider, dispassionately, the extent of his fault, and above all remember that he is a friend of mine."

"What!" said Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"His name," cried Ben Allen. "His name!"

"Mr. Nathaniel Winkle," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Benjamin Allen deliberately crushed his spectacles beneath the heel of his boot, and having picked up the pieces, and put them into three separate pockets, folded his arms, bit his lips, and looked in a threatening manner at the bland features of Mr. Pickwick.

"Then it's you, is it, sir, who have encouraged and brought about this match?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, at length.

"And it's this gentleman's servant, I suppose," interrupted the old lady, "who has been skulking about my house, and endeavoring to entrap my servants to conspire against their mistress. Martin!"

"Well?" said the surly man, coming forward.

"Is that the young man you saw in the lane, whom you told me about, this morning?"

Mr. Martin, who, as it has already appeared, was a man of few words, looked at Sam Weller, nodded his head, and growled forth, "That's the man!" Mr. Weller, who was never proud, gave a smile of friendly recognition as his eyes encountered those of the surly groom, and admitted, in courteous terms, that he had "knowed him afore."

"And this is the faithful creature," exclaimed Mr. Ben Allen, "whom I had nearly suffocated! Mr. Pickwick, how dare you allow your fellow to be employed in

the abduction of my sister? I demand that you explain this matter, sir."

"Explain it, sir!" cried Bob Sawyer, fiercely.

"It's a conspiracy," said Ben Allen.

"A regular plant," added Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"A disgraceful imposition," observed the old lady.

"Nothing but a do," remarked Martin.

"Pray hear me," urged Mr. Pickwick, as Mr. Ben Allen fell into a chair that patients were bled in, and gave way to his pocket-handkerchief. I have rendered no assistance in this matter beyond that of being present at one interview between the young people, which I could not prevent, and from which I conceived my presence would remove any slight coloring of impropriety that it might otherwise have had; this is the whole share I have taken in the transaction, and I had no suspicion that an immediate marriage was even contemplated. Though, mind," added Mr. Pickwick, hastily checking himself, "mind, I do not say I should have prevented it, if I *had* known that it was intended."

"You hear that, all of you; you hear that?" said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"I hope they do," mildly observed Mr. Pickwick, looking round, "and," added that gentleman: his color mounting as he spoke: "I hope they hear this, sir, also — that from what has been stated to me, sir, I assert that you were by no means justified in attempting to force your sister's inclinations as you did, and that you should rather have endeavored by your kindness and forbearance to have supplied the place of other nearer relations whom she has never known, from a child. As regards my young friend, I must beg to add, that in every point of worldly advantage, he is,

at least, on an equal footing with yourself, if not on a much better one, and that unless I hear this question discussed with becoming temper and moderation, I decline hearing any more said upon the subject."

"I wish to make a wery few remarks in addition to wot has been put for'ard by the honorable gen'l'm'n as has jist given over," said Mr. Weller, stepping forth, "wich is this here: a indiwidual in company has called me a feller."

"That has nothing whatever to do with the matter, Sam," interposed Mr. Pickwick. "Pray hold your tongue."

"I a'n't a-goin' to say nothin' on that ere p'int, sir," replied Sam, "but merely this here. P'raps that gen'l'm'n may think as there wos a priory 'tachment; but there worn't nothin' o' the sort, for the young lady said, in the wery beginnin' o' the keepin' company, that she couldn't abide him. Nobody's cut him out, and it 'ud ha' been jist the wery same for him if the young lady had never seen Mr. Vinkle. That's wot I wished to say, sir, and I hope I've now made that 'ere gen'l'm'n's mind easy."

A short pause followed these consolatory remarks of Mr. Weller. Then Mr. Ben Allen rising from his chair, protested that he would never see Arabella's face again: while Mr. Bob Sawyer, despite Sam's flattering assurance, vowed dreadful vengeance on the happy bridegroom.

But, just when matters were at their height, and threatening to remain so, Mr. Pickwick found a powerful assistant in the old lady, who, evidently much struck by the mode in which he had advocated her niece's cause, ventured to approach Mr. Benjamin Allen with a few comforting reflections, of which the chief were, that, after

all, perhaps, it was well it was no worse; the least said the soonest mended, and upon her word she did not know that it was so very bad after all; that what was over couldn't be begun, and what couldn't be cured must be endured: with various other assurances of the like novel and strengthening description. To all of these, Mr. Benjamin Allen replied that he meant no disrespect to his aunt, or anybody there, but if it were all the same to them, and they would allow him to have his own way, he would rather have the pleasure of hating his sister till death, and after it.

At length, when this determination had been announced half a hundred times. the old lady suddenly bridling up and looking very majestic, wished to know what she had done that no respect was to be paid to her years or station, and that she should be obliged to beg and pray, in that way, of her own nephew, whom she remembered about five-and-twenty years before he was born, and whom she had known, personally, when he hadn't a tooth in his head; to say nothing of her presence on the first occasion of his having his hair cut, and assistance at numerous other times and ceremonies during his babyhood, of sufficient importance to found a claim upon his affection, obedience, and sympathies, forever.

While the good lady was bestowing this objurgation on Mr. Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer and Mr. Pickwick had retired in close conversation to the inner room, where Mr. Sawyer was observed to apply himself, several times, to the mouth of a black bottle, under the influence of which, his features gradually assumed a cheerful and even jovial expression. And at last he emerged from the room, bottle in hand, and remarking that he was very sorry to say

he had been making a fool of himself, begged to propose the health and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Winkle, whose felicity, so far from envying, he would be the first to congratulate them upon. Hearing this, Mr. Ben Allen suddenly arose from his chair, and seizing the black bottle drank the toast so heartily, that, the liquor being strong, he became nearly as black in the face as the bottle itself. Finally, the black bottle went round till it was empty, and there was so much shaking of hands and interchanging of compliments, that even the metal-visaged Mr. Martin condescended to smile.

"And now," said Bob Sawyer, rubbing his hands, "we'll have a jolly night."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Pickwick, "that I must return to my inn. I have not been accustomed to fatigue lately, and my journey has tired me exceedingly."

"You'll take some tea, Mr. Pickwick?" said the old lady, with irresistible sweetness.

"Thank you, I would rather not," replied that gentleman. The truth is, that the old lady's evidently increasing admiration was Mr. Pickwick's principal inducement for going away. He thought of Mrs. Bardell; and every glance of the old lady's eyes threw him into a cold perspiration.

As Mr. Pickwick could by no means be prevailed upon to stay, it was arranged, at once, on his own proposition, that Mr. Benjamin Allen should accompany him on his journey to the elder Mr. Winkle's, and that the coach should be at the door, at nine o'clock next morning. He then took his leave, and, followed by Samuel Weller, repaired to the Bush. It is worthy of remark, that Mr. Martin's face was horribly convulsed as he shook hands with Sam at parting, and that he gave vent to a smile

and an oath simultaneously: from which tokens it has been inferred by those who were best acquainted with that gentleman's peculiarities, that he expressed himself much pleased with Mr. Weller's society, and requested the honor of his further acquaintance.

"Shall I order a private room, sir?" inquired Sam, when they reached the Bush.

"Why, no, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick; "as I dined in the coffee-room, and shall go to bed soon, it is hardly worth while. See who there is in the traveller's room, Sam."

Mr. Weller departed on his errand, and presently returned to say, that there was only a gentleman with one eye: and that he and the landlord were drinking a bowl of bishop together.

"I will join them," said Mr. Pickwick.

"He's a queer customer, the vun-eyed vun, sir," observed Mr. Weller, as he led the way. "He's a gammonin' that 'ere landlord, he is, sir, till he don't rightly know wether he's a standing on the soles of his boots or the crown of his hat."

The individual to whom this observation referred, was sitting at the upper end of the room when Mr. Pickwick entered, and was smoking a large Dutch pipe, with his eye intently fixed on the round face of the landlord: a jolly looking old personage, to whom he had recently been relating some tale of wonder, as was testified by sundry disjointed exclamations of, "Well, I wouldn't have believed it! The strangest thing I ever heard! Couldn't have supposed it possible!" and other expressions of astonishment which burst spontaneously from his lips, as he returned the fixed gaze of the one-eyed man.

"Servant, sir," said the one-eyed man to Mr. Pickwick. "Fine night, sir."

"Very much so indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick, as the waiter placed a small decanter of brandy, and some hot water before him.

While Mr. Pickwick was mixing his brandy and water, the one-eyed man looked round at him earnestly, from time to time, and at length said —

"I think I've seen you before."

"I don't recollect you," rejoined Mr. Pickwick.

"I dare say not," said the one-eyed man. "You didn't know me, but I knew two friends of yours that were stopping at the Peacock at Eatanswill, at the time of the Election."

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," rejoined the one-eyed man. "I mentioned a little circumstance to them about a friend of mine of the name of Tom Smart. Perhaps you've heard them speak of it."

"Often," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, smiling. "He was your uncle, I think?"

"No, no — only a friend of my uncle's," replied the one-eyed man.

"He was a wonderful man, that uncle of yours, though," remarked the landlord, shaking his head.

"Well, I think he was; I think I may say he was," answered the one-eyed man. "I could tell you a story about that same uncle, gentlemen, that would rather surprise you."

"Could you?" said Mr. Pickwick. "Let us hear it, by all means."

The one-eyed Bagman ladled out a glass of negus from the bowl, and drank it; smoked a long whiff out of

the Dutch pipe; and then, calling to Sam Weller who was lingering near the door, that he needn't go away unless he wanted to, because the story was no secret, fixed his eye upon the landlord's, and proceeded, in the words of the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONTAINING THE STORY OF THE BAGMAN'S UNCLE.

"My uncle, gentlemen," said the bagman, "was one of the merriest, pleasantest, cleverest fellows that ever lived. I wish you had known him, gentlemen. On second thoughts, gentlemen, I *don't* wish you had known him, for if you had, you would have been all, by this time, in the ordinary course of nature, if not dead, at all events so near it, as to have taken to stopping at home and giving up company: which would have deprived me of the inestimable pleasure of addressing you at this moment. Gentlemen, I wish your fathers and mothers had known my uncle. They would have been amazingly fond of him, especially your respectable mothers; I know they would. If any two of his numerous virtues predominated over the many that adorned his character, I should say they were his mixed punch and his after-supper song. Excuse my dwelling on these melancholy recollections of departed worth; you won't see a man like my uncle every day in the week.

"I have always considered it a great point in my uncle's character, gentlemen, that he was the intimate friend and companion of Tom Smart, of the great house of Bilson and Slum, Cateaton Street, City. My uncle collected for Tiggin and Welps, but for a long time he

went pretty near the same journey as Tom; and the very first night they met, my uncle took a fancy for Tom, and Tom took a fancy for my uncle. They made a bet of a new hat before they had known each other half an hour, who should brew the best quart of punch and drink it the quickest. My uncle was judged to have won the making, but Tom Smart beat him in the drinking by about half a salt-spoon-full. They took another quart apiece to drink each other's health in, and were stanch friends ever afterwards. There's a destiny in these things, gentlemen; we can't help it.

"In personal appearance, my uncle was a trifle shorter than the middle size; he was a thought stouter too, than the ordinary run of people, and perhaps his face might be a shade redder. He had the jolliest face you ever saw, gentlemen: something like Punch, with a handsomer nose and chin; his eyes were always twinkling and sparkling with good-humor; and a smile — not one of your unmeaning wooden grins, but a real merry, hearty, good-tempered smile — was perpetually on his countenance. He was pitched out of his gig once, and knocked, head first, against a mile-stone. There he lay, stunned, and so cut about the face with some gravel which had been heaped up alongside it, that, to use my uncle's own strong expression, if his mother could have revisited the earth, she wouldn't have known him. Indeed, when I come to think of the matter, gentlemen, I feel pretty sure she wouldn't, for she died when my uncle was two years and seven months old, and I think it's very likely that, even without the gravel, his top-boots would have puzzled the good lady not a little: to say nothing of his jolly red face. However, there he lay, and I have heard my uncle say, many a time, that

the man said who picked him up that he was smiling as merrily as if he had tumbled out for a treat, and that after they had bled him, the first faint glimmerings of returning animation, were, his jumping up in bed, bursting out into a loud laugh, kissing the young woman who held the basin, and demanding a mutton-chop and a pickled walnut instantly. He was very fond of pickled walnuts, gentlemen. He said he always found that, taken without vinegar, they relished the beer.

"My uncle's great journey was in the fall of the leaf, at which time he collected debts, and took orders, in the north: going from London to Edinburgh, from Edinburgh to Glasgow, from Glasgow back to Edinburgh, and thence to London by the smack. You are to understand that his second visit to Edinburgh was for his own pleasure. He used to go back for a week, just to look up his old friends; and what with breakfasting with this one, lunching with that, dining with a third, and supping with another, a pretty tight week he used to make of it. I don't know whether any of you, gentlemen, ever partook of a real substantial hospitable Scotch breakfast, and then went out to a slight lunch of a bushel of oysters, a dozen or so of bottled ale, and a noggin or two of whiskey to close up with. If you ever did, you will agree with me that it requires a pretty strong head to go out to dinner and supper afterwards.

"But bless your hearts and eyebrows, all this sort of thing was nothing to my uncle! He was so well seasoned, that it was mere child's play. I have heard him say that he could see the Dundee people out, any day, and walk home afterwards without staggering; and yet the Dundee people have as strong heads and as strong punch, gentlemen, as you are likely to meet with, be-

tween the poles. I have heard of a Glasgow man and a Dundee man drinking against each other for fifteen hours at a sitting. They were both suffocated, as nearly as could be ascertained, at the same moment, but with this trifling exception, gentlemen, they were not a bit the worse for it.

"One night, within four-and-twenty hours of the time when he had settled to take shipping for London, my uncle supped at the house of a very old friend of his, a Baillie Mac something, and four syllables after it, who lived in the old town of Edinburgh. There were the baillie's wife and the baillie's three daughters, and the baillie's grown-up son, and three or four stout, bushy eye-browed, canty old Scotch fellows, that the baillie had got together to do honor to my uncle, and help to make merry. It was a glorious supper. There was kippered salmon, and Finnan haddocks, and a lamb's head, and a haggis — a celebrated Scotch dish, gentlemen, which my uncle used to say always looked to him, when it came to table, very much like a cupid's stomach — and a great many other things besides, that I forget the names of, but very good things notwithstanding. The lassies were pretty and agreeable; the baillie's wife, one of the best creatures that ever lived; and my uncle in thoroughly good cue: the consequence of which was, that the young ladies tittered and giggled, and the old lady laughed out loud, and the baillie and the other old fellows roared till they were red in the face, the whole mortal time. I don't quite recollect how many tumblers of whiskey toddy each man drank after supper; but this I know, that about one o'clock in the morning, the baillie's grown-up son became insensible while attempting the first verse of 'Willie brewed a peck o' maut;' and he

having been, for half an hour before, the only other man visible above the mahogany, it occurred to my uncle that it was almost time to think about going: especially as drinking had set in at seven o'clock, in order that he might get home at a decent hour. But, thinking it might not be quite polite to go just then, my uncle voted himself into the chair, mixed another glass, rose to propose his own health, addressed himself in a neat and complimentary speech, and drank the toast with great enthusiasm. Still nobody woke; so my uncle took a little drop more — neat this time, to prevent the toddy disagreeing with him — and, laying violent hands on his hat, sallied forth into the street.

"It was a wild gusty night when my uncle closed the baillie's door, and settling his hat firmly on his head, to prevent the wind from taking it, thrust his hands into his pockets, and looking upwards, took a short survey of the state of the weather. The clouds were drifting over the moon at their giddiest speed: at one time wholly obscuring her: at another, suffering her to burst forth in full splendor and shed her light on all the objects around: anon, driving over her again, with increased velocity, and shrouding everything in darkness. 'Really, this won't do,' said my uncle, addressing himself to the weather, as if he felt himself personally offended. 'This is not at all the kind of thing for my voyage. It will not do, at any price,' said my uncle, very impressively. Having repeated this, several times, he recovered his balance with some difficulty — for he was rather giddy with looking up into the sky so long — and walked merrily on.

"The baillie's house was in the Canongate, and my uncle was going to the other end of Leith Walk, rather

better than a mile's journey. On either side of him, there shot up against the dark sky, tall, gaunt, strag, gling houses, with time-stained fronts, and windows that seemed to have shared the lot of eyes in mortals, and to have grown dim and sunken with age. Six, seven, eight stories high, were the houses; story piled above story, as children build with cards — throwing their dark shadows over the roughly paved road, and making the dark night darker. A few oil lamps were scattered at long distances, but they only served to mark the dirty entrance to some narrow close, or to show where a common stair communicated, by steep and intricate windings, with the various flats above. Glancing at all these things with the air of a man who had seen them too often before, to think them worthy of much notice now, my uncle walked up the middle of the street, with a thumb in each waistcoat pocket, indulging, from time to time, in various snatches of song, chanted forth with such good-will and spirit, that the quiet honest folk started from their first sleep and lay trembling in bed till the sound died away in the distance; when, satisfying themselves that it was only some drunken ne'er-do-weel finding his way home, they covered themselves up warm and fell asleep again.

"I am particular in describing how my uncle walked up the middle of the street, with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, gentlemen, because, as he often used to say (and with great reason too) there is nothing at all extraordinary in this story, unless you distinctly understand at the beginning, that he was not by any means of a marvellous or romantic turn.

"Gentlemen, my uncle walked on with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, taking the middle of the street to

himself, and singing, now a verse of a love song, and then a verse of a drinking one, and when he was tired of both, whistling melodiously, until he reached the North Bridge, which, at this point, connects the old and new towns of Edinburgh. Here he stopped for a minute, to look at the strange irregular clusters of lights piled one above the other, and twinkling afar off, so high in the air, that they looked like stars, gleaming from the castle walls on the one side and the Calton Hill on the other, as if they illuminated veritable castles in the air: while the old picturesque town slept heavily on, in gloom and darkness below: its palace and chapel of Holyrood, guarded day and night, as a friend of my uncle's used to say, by old Arthur's Seat, towering, surly and dark, like some gruff genius, over the ancient city he has watched so long. I say, gentlemen, my uncle stopped here, for a minute, to look about him; and then, paying a compliment to the weather which had a little cleared up, though the moon was sinking, walked on again, as royally as before: keeping the middle of the road with great dignity, and looking as if he should very much like to meet with somebody who would dispute possession of it with him. There was nobody at all disposed to contest the point, as it happened; and so, on he went, with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, like a lamb.

"When my uncle reached the end of Leith Walk, he had to cross a pretty large piece of waste ground which separated him from a short street which he had to turn down, to go direct to his lodging. Now, in this piece of waste ground, there was, at that time, an enclosure belonging to some wheelwright, who contracted with the Post-office for the purchase of old worn-out mail-coaches; and my uncle, being very fond of coaches, old, young, or

middle-aged, all at once took it into his head to step out of his road for no other purpose than to peep between the palings at these mails: about a dozen of which, he remembered to have seen, crowded together in a very forlorn and dismantled state, inside. My uncle was a very enthusiastic, emphatic sort of person, gentlemen; so, finding that he could not obtain a good peep between the palings, he got over them, and sitting himself quietly down on an old axletree, began to contemplate the mail-coaches with a deal of gravity.

"There might be a dozen of them, or there might be more — my uncle was never quite certain on this point, and being a man of very scrupulous veracity about numbers, didn't like to say — but there they stood, all huddled together in the most desolate condition imaginable. The doors had been torn from their hinges and removed; the linings had been stripped off: only a shred hanging here and there by a rusty nail; the lamps were gone, the poles had long since vanished, the iron-work was rusty, the paint worn away; the wind whistled through the chinks in the bare wood-work; and the rain, which had collected on the roofs, fell, drop by drop, into the insides with a hollow and melancholy sound. They were the decaying skeletons of departed mails, and in that lonely place, at that time of night, they looked chill and dismal.

"My uncle rested his head upon his hands, and thought of the busy bustling people who had rattled about, years before, in the old coaches, and were now as silent and changed; he thought of the numbers of people to whom one of those crazy, mouldering vehicles had borne, night after night, for many years, and through all weathers, the anxiously expected intelligence, the eagerly looked-for

remittance, the promised assurance of health and safety, the sudden announcement of sickness and death. The merchant, the lover, the wife, the widow, the mother, the school-boy, the very child who tottered to the door at the postman's knock — how had they all looked forward to the arrival of the old coach. And where were they all now!

"Gentlemen, my uncle used to *say* that he thought all this at the time, but I rather suspect he learnt it out of some book afterwards, for he distinctly stated that he fell into a kind of doze, as he sat on the old axletree looking at the decayed mail-coaches, and that he was suddenly awakened by some deep church-bell striking two. Now, my uncle was never a fast thinker, and if he had thought all these things, I am quite certain it would have taken him till full half-past two o'clock, at the very least. I am, therefore, decidedly of opinion, gentlemen, that my uncle fell into the kind of doze, without having thought about anything at all.

"Be this as it may, a church-bell struck two. My uncle woke, rubbed his eyes, and jumped up in astonishment.

"In one instant, after the clock struck two, the whole of this deserted and quiet spot had become a scene of most extraordinary life and animation. The mail-coach doors were on their hinges, the lining was replaced, the iron-work was as good as new, the paint was restored, the lamps were alight, cushions and great-coats were on every coach-box, porters were thrusting parcels into every boot, guards were stowing away letter-bags, hostlers were dashing pails of water against the renovated wheels; numbers of men were rushing about, fixing poles into every coach; passengers arrived, portmanteaus were

handed up, horses were put to; and, in short, it was perfectly clear that every mail there was to be off directly. Gentlemen, my uncle opened his eyes so wide at all this, that, to the very last moment of his life, he used to wonder how it fell out that he had ever been able to shut 'em again.

"'Now then!' said a voice, as my uncle felt a hand on his shoulder. 'You're booked for one inside. You'd better get in.'

"'*I* booked!' said my uncle, turning round.

"'Yes, certainly.'

"My uncle, gentlemen, could say nothing; he was so very much astonished. The queerest thing of all, was, that although there was such a crowd of persons, and although fresh faces were pouring in every moment, there was no telling where they came from; they seemed to start up, in some strange manner, from the ground, or the air, and disappear in the same way. When a porter had put his luggage in the coach, and received his fare, he turned round and was gone; and before my uncle had well begun to wonder what had become of him, half-a-dozen fresh ones started up, and staggered along under the weight of parcels which seemed big enough to crush them. The passengers were all dressed so oddly too — large, broad-skirted laced coats with great cuffs and no collars; and wigs, gentlemen, — great formal wigs with a tie behind. My uncle could make nothing of it.

"'Now, *are* you going to get in?' said the person who had addressed my uncle before. He was dressed as a mail-guard, with a wig on his head and most enormous cuffs to his coat, and had a lantern in one hand, and a huge blunderbuss in the other, which he was going to

stow away in his little arm-chest. '*Are* you going to get in, Jack Martin?' said the guard, holding the lantern to my uncle's face.

"'Hallo!' said my uncle, falling back a step or two. 'That's familiar!'

"'It's so on the way-bill,' replied the guard.

"'Isn't there a "Mister" before it?' said my uncle — for he felt, gentlemen, that for a guard he didn't know, to call him Jack Martin, was a liberty which the Post-office wouldn't have sanctioned if they had known it.

"'No; there is not,' rejoined the guard coolly.

"'Is the fare paid?' inquired my uncle.

"'Of course it is,' rejoined the guard.

"'It is, is it?' said my uncle. 'Then here goes — which coach?'

"'This,' said the guard, pointing to an old-fashioned Edinburgh and London Mail, which had the steps down, and the door open. 'Stop — here are the other passengers. Let them get in first.'

"As the guard spoke, there all at once appeared, right in front of my uncle, a young gentleman in a powdered wig, and a sky-blue coat trimmed with silver, made very full and broad in the skirts, which were lined with buckram. Tiggin and Welps were in the printed calico and waistcoat piece line, gentlemen, so my uncle knew all the materials at once. He wore knee-breeches, and a kind of leggings rolled up, over his silk stockings, and shoes with buckles; he had ruffles at his wrists, a three-cornered hat on his head, and a long taper sword by his side. The flaps of his waistcoat came half-way down his thighs, and the ends of his cravat reached to his waist. He stalked gravely to the coach-door, pulled off his hat, and held it above his head at arm's length: cock-

ing his little finger in the air at the same time, as some affected people do, when they take a cup of tea. Then he drew his feet together, and made a low grave bow, and then put out his left hand. My uncle was just going to step forward, and shake it heartily, when he perceived that these attentions were directed, not towards him, but to a young lady, who just then appeared at the foot of the steps, attired in an old-fashioned green velvet dress, with a long waist and stomacher. She had no bonnet on her head, gentlemen, which was muffled in a black silk hood, but she looked round for an instant as she prepared to get into the coach, and such a beautiful face as she discovered, my uncle had never seen — not even in a picture. She got into the coach, holding up her dress with one hand; and, as my uncle always said with a round oath, when he told the story, he wouldn't have believed it possible that legs and feet could have been brought to such a state of perfection unless he had seen them with his own eyes.

"But, in this one glimpse of the beautiful face, my uncle saw that the young lady had cast an imploring look upon him, and that she appeared terrified and distressed. He noticed too, that the young fellow in the powdered wig, notwithstanding his show of gallantry, which was all very fine and grand, clasped her tight by the wrist when she got in, and followed himself immediately afterwards. An uncommonly ill-looking fellow in a close brown wig, and a plum-colored suit, wearing a very large sword, and boots up to his hips, belonged to the party; and when he sat himself down, next to the young lady, who shrunk into a corner at his approach, my uncle was confirmed in his original impression that something dark and mysterious was going forward, or,

as he always said himself, that 'there was a screw loose somewhere.' It's quite surprising how quickly he made up his mind to help the lady at any peril, if she needed help.

"'Death and lightning!' exclaimed the young gentleman, laying his hand upon his sword, as my uncle entered the coach.

"'Blood and thunder!' roared the other gentleman. With this, he whipped his sword out, and made a lunge at my uncle without further ceremony. My uncle had no weapon about him, but with great dexterity he snatched the ill-looking gentleman's three-cornered hat from his head, and receiving the point of his sword right through the crown, squeezed the sides together, and held it tight.

"'Pink him behind!' cried the ill-looking gentleman to his companion, as he struggled to regain his sword.

"'He had better not,' cried my uncle, displaying the heel of one of his shoes in a threatening manner. 'I'll kick his brains out if he has any, or fracture his skull if he hasn't.' Exerting all his strength at this moment, my uncle wrenched the ill-looking man's sword from his grasp, and flung it clean out of the coach-window: upon which the younger gentleman vociferated, 'Death and lightning!' again, and laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword, in a very fierce manner, but didn't draw it. Perhaps, gentlemen, as my uncle used to say, with a smile, perhaps he was afraid of alarming the lady.

"'Now, gentlemen,' said my uncle, taking his seat deliberately, 'I don't want to have any death, with or without lightning, in a lady's presence, and we have had quite blood and thundering enough for one journey; so, if you please, we'll sit in our places like quiet insides — here, guard, pick up that gentleman's carving-knife.'

"As quickly as my uncle said the words, the guard appeared at the coach-window, with the gentleman's sword in his hand. He held up his lantern, and looked earnestly in my uncle's face, as he handed it in: when, by its light, my uncle saw, to his great surprise, that an immense crowd of mail-coach guards swarmed round the window: every one of whom had his eyes earnestly fixed upon him too. He had never seen such a sea of white faces, and red bodies, and earnest eyes, in all his born days.

"'This is the strangest sort of thing I ever had anything to do with,' thought my uncle — 'allow me to return you your hat, sir.'

"The ill-looking gentleman received his three-cornered hat in silence; looked at the hole in the middle with an inquiring air; and finally stuck it on the top of his wig, with a solemnity the effect of which was a trifle impaired by his sneezing violently at the moment, and jerking it off again.

"'All right!' cried the guard with the lantern, mounting into his little seat behind. Away they went. My uncle peeped out of the coach-window as they emerged from the yard, and observed that the other mails, with coachmen, guards, horses, and passengers, complete, were driving round and round in circles, at a slow trot of about five miles an hour. My uncle burnt with indignation, gentlemen. As a commercial man, he felt that the mail-bags were not to be trifled with, and he resolved to memorialize the Post-office on the subject, the very instant he reached London.

"At present, however, his thoughts were occupied with the young lady who sat in the farthest corner of the coach, with her face muffled closely in her hood: the gen-

tleman with the sky-blue coat sitting opposite to her: and the other man in the plum-colored suit, by her side: and both watching her intently. If she so much as rustled the folds of her hood, he could hear the ill-looking man clap his hand upon his sword, and could tell by the other's breathing (it was so dark he couldn't see his face) that he was looking as big as if he were going to devour her at a mouthful. This roused my uncle more and more, and he resolved, come what come might, to see the end of it. He had a great admiration for bright eyes, and sweet faces, and pretty legs and feet; in short, he was fond of the whole sex. It runs in our family, gentlemen — so am I.

"Many were the devices which my uncle practised to attract the lady's attention, or at all events, to engage the mysterious gentlemen in conversation. They were all in vain; the gentlemen wouldn't talk, and the lady didn't dare. He thrust his head out of the coach-window at intervals, and bawled out to know why they didn't go faster. But he called till he was hoarse — nobody paid the least attention to him. He leant back in the coach, and thought of the beautiful face, and the feet and legs. This answered better; it whiled away the time, and kept him from wondering where he was going, and how it was he found himself in such an odd situation. Not that this would have worried him much, any way — he was a mighty free and easy, roving, devil-may-care sort of person, was my uncle, gentlemen.

"All of a sudden the coach stopped. 'Hallo!' said my uncle, 'What's in the wind now?'

"'Alight here,' said the guard, letting down the steps.

"'Here!' cried my uncle.

"'Here,' rejoined the guard.

"'I'll do nothing of the sort,' said my uncle.

"'Very well — then stop where you are,' said the guard.

"'I will,' said my uncle.

"'Do,' said the guard.

"The other passengers had regarded this colloquy with great attention; and, finding that my uncle was determined not to alight, the younger man squeezed past him, to hand the lady out. At this moment, the ill-looking man was inspecting the hole in the crown of his three-cornered hat. As the young lady brushed past, she dropped one of her gloves into my uncle's hand, and softly whispered, with her lips so close to his face that he felt her warm breath on his nose, the single word 'Help!' Gentlemen, my uncle leaped out of the coach, at once, with such violence that it rocked on the springs again.

"'Oh! you've thought better of it, have you?' said the guard, when he saw my uncle standing on the ground.

"My uncle looked at the guard for a few seconds, in some doubt whether it wouldn't be better to wrench his blunderbuss from him, fire it in the face of the man with the big sword, knock the rest of the company over the head with the stock, snatch up the young lady, and go off in the smoke. On second thoughts, however, he abandoned this plan, as being a shade too melodramatic in the execution, and followed the two mysterious men, who, keeping the lady between them, were now entering an old house, in front of which the coach had stopped. They turned into the passage, and my uncle followed.

"Of all the ruinous and desolate places my uncle had ever beheld, this was the most so. It looked as if it had once been a large house of entertainment; but the roof

had fallen in, in many places, and the stairs were steep, rugged, and broken. There was a huge fireplace in the room into which they walked, and the chimney was blackened with smoke; but no warm blaze lighted it up now. The white feathery dust of burnt wood was still strewed over the hearth, but the stove was cold, and all was dark and gloomy.

"'Well,' said my uncle, as he looked about him, 'A mail travelling at the rate of six miles and a half an hour, and stopping for an indefinite time at such a hole as this, is rather an irregular sort of proceeding, I fancy. This shall be made known; I'll write to the papers.'

"My uncle said this in a pretty loud voice, and in an open unreserved sort of manner, with a view of engaging the two strangers in conversation if he could. But, neither of them took any more notice of him than whispering to each other, and scowling at him as they did so. The lady was at the farther end of the room, and once she ventured to wave her hand, as if beseeching my uncle's assistance.

"At length the two strangers advanced a little, and the conversation began in earnest.

"'You don't know this is a private room; I suppose, fellow?' said the gentleman in sky-blue.

"'No, I do not, fellow,' rejoined my uncle. 'Only if this is a private room specially ordered for the occasion, I should think the public room must be a *very* comfortable one;' with this my uncle sat himself down in a high-backed chair, and took such an accurate measure of the gentleman, with his eyes, that Tiggin and Welps could have supplied him with printed calico for a suit, and not an inch too much or too little, from that estimate alone.

"'Quit this room,' said both the men together, grasping their swords.

"'Eh?' said my uncle, not at all appearing to comprehend their meaning.

"'Quit the room, or you are a dead man,' said the ill-looking fellow with the large sword, drawing it at the same time and flourishing it in the air.

"'Down with him!' cried the gentleman in sky-blue, drawing his sword also, and falling back two or three yards. 'Down with him!' The lady gave a loud scream.

"Now, my uncle was always remarkable for great boldness, and great presence of mind. All the time that he had appeared so indifferent to what was going on, he had been looking slyly about, for some missile or weapon of defence, and at the very instant when the swords were drawn, he espied, standing in the chimney-corner, an old basket-hilted rapier in a rusty scabbard. At one bound, my uncle caught it in his hand, drew it, flourished it gallantly above his head, called aloud to the lady to keep out of the way, hurled the chair at the man in sky-blue, and the scabbard at the man in plum-color, and taking advantage of the confusion, fell upon them both, pell-mell.

"Gentlemen, there is an old story — none the worse for being true — regarding a fine young Irish gentleman, who being asked if he could play the fiddle, replied he had no doubt he could, but he couldn't exactly say, for certain, because he had never tried. This is not inapplicable to my uncle and his fencing. He had never had a sword in his hand before, except once when he played Richard the Third at a private theatre: upon which occasion it was arranged with Richmond that he was to be run through, from behind, without showing fight at all; but here he was, cutting and slashing with two experi-

enced swordsmen, thrusting, and guarding, and poking, and slicing, and acquitting himself in the most manful and dexterous manner possible, although up to that time he had never been aware that he had the least notion of the science. It only shows how true the old saying is, that a man never knows what he can do, till he tries, gentlemen.

"The noise of the combat was terrific; each of the three combatants swearing like troopers, and their swords clashing with as much noise as if all the knives and steels in Newport market were rattling together, at the same time. When it was at its very height, the lady, to encourage my uncle most probably, withdrew her hood entirely from her face, and disclosed a countenance of such dazzling beauty, that he would have fought against fifty men, to win one smile from it, and die. He had done wonders before, but now he began to powder away like a raving mad giant.

"At this very moment, the gentleman in sky-blue turning round, and seeing the young lady with her face uncovered, vented an exclamation of rage and jealousy; and turning his weapon against her beautiful bosom, pointed a thrust at her heart, which caused my uncle to utter a cry of apprehension that made the building ring. The lady stepped lightly aside, and snatching the young man's sword from his hand, before he had recovered his balance, drove him to the wall, and running it through him, and the panelling, up to the very hilt, pinned him there, hard and fast. It was a splendid example. My uncle, with a loud shout of triumph, and a strength that was irresistible, made his adversary retreat in the same direction, and plunging the old rapier into the very centre of a large red flower in the pattern of his waistcoat,

nailed him beside his friend; there they both stood, gentlemen: jerking their arms and legs about, in agony, like the toy-shop figures that are moved by a piece of packthread. My uncle always said, afterwards, that this was one of the surest means he knew of, for disposing of an enemy; but it was liable to one objection on the ground of expense, inasmuch as it involved the loss of a sword for every man disabled.

"'The mail, the mail!' cried the lady, running up to my uncle and throwing her beautiful arms round his neck; 'we may yet escape.'

"'*May!*' cried my uncle; 'why, my dear, there's nobody else to kill, is there?' My uncle was rather disappointed, gentlemen, for he thought a little quiet bit of love-making would be agreeable after the slaughtering, if it were only to change the subject.

"'We have not an instant to lose here,' said the young lady. 'He (pointing to the young gentleman in sky-blue) is the only son of the powerful Marquess of Filletoville.'

"'Well, then, my dear, I'm afraid he'll never come to the title,' said my uncle, looking coolly at the young gentleman as he stood fixed up against the wall, in the cockchafer fashion I have described. 'You have cut off the entail, my love.'

"'I have been torn from my home and friends by these villains,' said the young lady, her features glowing with indignation. 'That wretch would have married me by violence in another hour.'

"'Confound his impudence!' said my uncle, bestowing a very contemptuous look on the dying heir of Filletoville.

"'As you may guess from what you have seen,' said the young lady, 'the party were prepared to murder me

if I appealed to any one for assistance. If their accomplices find us here, we are lost. Two minutes hence may be too late. The mail!' — with these words, overpowered by her feelings, and the exertion of sticking the young Marquess of Filletoville, she sunk into my uncle's arms. My uncle caught her up, and bore her to the house-door. There stood the mail, with four long-tailed, flowing-maned, black horses, ready harnessed; but no coachman, no guard, no hostler even, at the horses' heads.

"Gentlemen, I hope I do no injustice to my uncle's memory, when I express my opinion, that although he was a bachelor, he *had* held some ladies in his arms, before this time; I believe indeed, that he had rather a habit of kissing barmaids; and I know, that in one or two instances, he had been seen by credible witnesses, to hug a landlady in a very perceptible manner. I mention the circumstance, to show what a very uncommon sort of person this beautiful young lady must have been, to have affected my uncle in the way she did; he used to say, that as her long dark hair trailed over his arm, and her beautiful dark eyes fixed themselves upon his face when she recovered, he felt so strange and nervous, that his legs trembled beneath him. But, who can look in a sweet soft pair of dark eyes, without feeling queer? *I* can't, gentlemen. I am afraid to look at some eyes I know, and that's the truth of it.

"'You will never leave me,' murmured the young lady.

"'Never,' said my uncle. And he meant it too.

"'My dear preserver!' exclaimed the young lady. My dear, kind, brave preserver!'

"'Don't,' said my uncle, interrupting her.

"'Why?' inquired the young lady.

"'Because your mouth looks so beautiful when you speak,' rejoined my uncle, 'that I am afraid I shall be rude enough to kiss it.'

"The young lady put up her hand as if to caution my uncle not to do so, and said — no, she didn't say anything — she smiled. When you are looking at a pair of the most delicious lips in the world, and see them gently break into a roguish smile — if you are very near them, and nobody else by — you cannot better testify your admiration of their beautiful form and color than by kissing them at once. My uncle did so, and I honor him for it.

"'Hark!' cried the young lady, starting. 'The noise of wheels and horses!'

"'So it is,' said my uncle, listening. He had a good ear for wheels, and the trampling of hoofs; but there appeared to be so many horses and carriages rattling towards them, from a distance, that it was impossible to form a guess at their number. The sound was like that of fifty brakes, with six blood cattle in each.

"'We are pursued!' cried the young lady, clasping her hands. 'We are pursued. I have no hope but in you!'

"There was such an expression of terror in her beautiful face, that my uncle made up his mind at once. He lifted her into the coach, told her not to be frightened, pressed his lips to hers once more, and then advising her to draw up the window to keep the cold air out, mounted to the box.

"'Stay, love,' cried the young lady.

"'What's the matter?' said my uncle, from the coach-box.

"'I want to speak to you,' said the young lady; 'only a word — only one word, dearest.'

"'Must I get down?' inquired my uncle. The lady made no answer, but she smiled again. Such a smile gentlemen! — it beat the other one, all to nothing. My uncle descended from his perch in a twinkling.

"'What is it, my dear?' said my uncle, looking in at the coach-window. The lady happened to bend forward at the same time, and my uncle thought she looked more beautiful than she had done yet. He was very close to her just then, gentlemen, so he really ought to know.

"'What is it, my dear?' said my uncle.

"'Will you never love any one but me — never marry any one beside?' said the young lady.

"My uncle swore a great oath that he never would marry anybody else, and the young lady drew in her head, and pulled up the window. He jumped upon the box, squared his elbows, adjusted the ribbons, seized the whip which lay on the roof, gave one flick to the off leader, and away went the four long-tailed, flowing-maned black horses, at fifteen good English miles an hour, with the old mail-coach behind them — whew! how they tore along!

"The noise behind grew louder. The faster the old mail went, the faster came the pursuers — men, horses, dogs, were leagued in the pursuit. The noise was frightful, but, above all, rose the voice of the young lady, urging my uncle on, and shrieking 'faster! faster!'

"They whirled past the dark trees, as feathers would be swept before a hurricane. Houses, gates, churches, haystacks, objects of every kind they shot by, with a velocity and noise like roaring waters suddenly let loose. Still the noise of pursuit grew louder, and still my uncle could hear the young lady wildly screaming 'faster! faster!'

"My uncle plied whip and rein; and the horses flew onward till they were white with foam; and yet the noise behind increased; and yet the young lady cried 'faster! faster!' My uncle gave a loud stamp on the boot in the energy of the moment, and — found that it was gray morning, and he was sitting in the wheelwright's yard, on the box of an old Edinburgh mail, shivering with the cold and wet, and stamping his feet to warm them! He got down, and looked eagerly inside for the beautiful young lady — alas! there was neither door nor seat to the coach — it was a mere shell.

"Of course, my uncle knew very well that there was some mystery in the matter, and that everything had passed, exactly as he used to relate it. He remained stanch to the great oath he had sworn to the beautiful young lady: refusing several eligible landladies on her account, and dying a bachelor at last. He always said, what a curious thing it was that he should have found out, by such a mere accident as his clambering over the palings, that the ghosts of mail-coaches and horses, guards, coachmen, and passengers, were in the habit of making journeys regularly every night; he used to add, that he believed he was the only living person who had ever been taken as a passenger on one of these excursions; and I think he was right, gentlemen — at least I never heard of any other."

"I wonder what these ghosts of mail-coaches carry in their bags," said the landlord, who had listened to the whole story with profound attention.

"The dead letters, of course," said the Bagman.

"Oh, ah — to be sure," rejoined the landlord. "I never thought of that."

CHAPTER L.

HOW MR. PICKWICK SPED UPON HIS MISSION, AND HOW HE WAS REINFORCED IN THE OUTSET BY A MOST UNEXPECTED AUXILIARY.

THE horses were put to, punctually at a quarter before nine next morning, and Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller having each taken his seat, the one inside and the other out, the postilion was duly directed to repair in the first instance to Mr. Bob Sawyer's house, for the purpose of taking up Mr. Benjamin Allen.

It was with feelings of no small astonishment, when the carriage drew up before the door with the red lamp, and the very legible inscription of "Sawyer late Nockemorf," that Mr. Pickwick saw, on popping his head out of the coach-window, the boy in the gray livery very busily employed in putting up the shutters: the which, being an unusual and un-business-like proceeding at that hour of the morning, at once suggested to his mind, two inferences — the one, that some good friend and patient of Mr. Bob Sawyer's was dead; the other, that Mr. Bob Sawyer himself was bankrupt.

"What is the matter?" said Mr. Pickwick to the boy.

"Nothing's the matter, sir," replied the boy, expanding his mouth to the whole breadth of his countenance.

"All right, all right!" cried Bob Sawyer, suddenly appearing at the door, with a small leathern knapsack, limp and dirty, in one hand, and a rough coat and shawl thrown over the other arm. "I'm going, old fellow."

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," replied Bob Sawyer, "and a regular expedition we'll make of it. Here, Sam — look out!" Thus briefly bespeaking Mr. Weller's attention, Mr. Bob Sawyer jerked the leathern knapsack into the dickey, where it was immediately stowed away, under the seat, by Sam, who regarded the proceeding with great admiration. This done, Mr. Bob Sawyer, with the assistance of the boy, forcibly worked himself into the rough coat, which was a few sizes too small for him, and then advancing to the coach-window, thrust in his head, and laughed boisterously.

"What a start it is — isn't it?" cried Bob, wiping the tears out of his eyes, with one of the cuffs of the rough coat.

"My dear sir," said Mr. Pickwick, with some embarrassment, "I had no idea of your accompanying us."

"No, that's just the very thing," replied Bob, seizing Mr. Pickwick by the lappel of his coat. "That's the joke."

"Oh, that's the joke?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Of course," replied Bob. "It's the whole point of the thing, you know — that, and leaving the business to take care of itself, as it seems to have made up its mind not to take care of me." With this explanation of the phenomenon of the shutters, Mr. Bob Sawyer pointed to the shop, and relapsed into an ecstasy of mirth.

"Bless me, you are surely not mad enough to think of leaving your patients without anybody to attend

them!" remonstrated Mr. Pickwick in a very serious tone.

"Why not?" asked Bob, in reply. "I shall save by it, you know. None of them ever pay. Besides," said Bob, lowering his voice to a confidential whisper, "they will be all the better for it; for, being nearly out of drugs, and not able to increase my account just now, I should have been obliged to give them calomel all round, and it would have been certain to have disagreed with some of them — so it's all for the best."

There was a philosophy, and a strength of reasoning, about this reply, which Mr. Pickwick was not prepared for. He paused a few moments, and added, less firmly than before:

"But this chaise, my young friend — this chaise will only hold two; and I am pledged to Mr. Allen."

"Don't think of me for a minute," replied Bob. "I've arranged it all; Sam and I will share the dickey between us. Look here. This little bill is to be wafered on the shop-door: 'Sawyer, late Nockemorf. Inquire of Mrs. Cripps over the way.' Mrs. Cripps is my boy's mother. 'Mr. Sawyer's very sorry' says Mrs. Cripps, 'couldn't help it — fetched away early this morning to a consultation of the very first surgeons in the country — couldn't do without him — would have him at any price — tremendous operation.' The fact is," said Bob in conclusion, "It'll do me more good than otherwise, I expect. If it gets into one of the local papers, it will be the making of me. Here's Ben — now then, jump in!"

With these hurried words, Mr. Bob Sawyer pushed the post-boy on one side, jerked his friend into the vehicle, slammed the door, put up the steps, wafered the

bill on the street-door, locked it, put the key in his pocket, jumped into the dickey, gave the word for starting; and did the whole with such extraordinary precipitation, that before Mr. Pickwick had well begun to consider whether Mr. Bob Sawyer ought to go or not, they were rolling away, with Mr. Bob Sawyer, thoroughly established as part and parcel of the equipage.

So long as their progress was confined to the streets of Bristol, the facetious Bob kept his professional green spectacles on, and conducted himself with becoming steadiness and gravity of demeanor: merely giving utterance to divers verbal witticisms for the exclusive behoof and entertainment of Mr. Samuel Weller; but when they emerged on the open road, he threw off his green spectacles and his gravity together, and performed a great variety of practical jokes, which were calculated to attract the attention of the passers-by, and to render the carriage and those it contained, objects of more than ordinary curiosity; the least conspicuous among these feats, being, a most vociferous imitation of a key-bugle, and the ostentatious display of a crimson silk pocket-handkerchief attached to a walking-stick, which was occasionally waved in the air with various gestures indicative of supremacy and defiance.

"I wonder," said Mr. Pickwick, stopping in the midst of a most sedate conversation with Ben Allen, bearing reference to the numerous good qualities of Mr. Winkle and his sister: "I wonder what all the people we pass, can see in us to make them stare so."

"It's a neat turn-out," replied Ben Allen, with something of pride in his tone. "They're not used to see this sort of thing, every day, I dare say."

"Possibly," replied Mr. Pickwick. "It may be so. Perhaps it is."

Mr. Pickwick might very probably have reasoned himself into the belief that it really was: had he not, just then happening to look out of the coach-window, observed that the looks of the passengers betokened anything but respectful astonishment, and that various telegraphic communications appeared to be passing between them and some persons outside the vehicle: whereupon it occurred to him that these demonstrations might be, in some remote degree, referrible to the humorous deportment of Mr. Robert Sawyer.

"I hope," said Mr. Pickwick, "that our volatile friend is committing no absurdities in that dickey behind."

"Oh dear no," replied Ben Allen. "Except when he's elevated, Bob's the quietest creature breathing."

Here a prolonged imitation of a key-bugle broke upon the ear, succeeded by cheers and screams, all of which evidently proceeded from the throat and lungs of the quietest creature breathing, or in plainer designation, of Mr. Bob Sawyer himself.

Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen looked expressively at each other, and the former gentleman taking off his hat, and leaning out of the coach-window until nearly the whole of his waistcoat was outside it, was at length enabled to catch a glimpse of his facetious friend.

Mr. Bob Sawyer was seated: not in the dickey, but on the roof of the chaise, with his legs as far asunder as they would conveniently go, wearing Mr. Samuel Weller's hat on one side of his head, and bearing, in one hand, a most enormous sandwich, while, in the other, he supported a goodly-sized case-bottle, to both of which he applied himself with intense relish: varying the monot-

ony of the occupation by an occasional howl, or the interchange of some lively *badinage* with any passing stranger. The crimson flag was carefully tied in an erect position to the rail of the dickey; and Mr. Samuel Weller, decorated with Bob Sawyer's hat, was seated in the centre thereof, discussing a twin sandwich, with an animated countenance; the expression of which, betokened his entire and perfect approval of the whole arrangement.

This was enough to irritate a gentleman with Mr. Pickwick's sense of propriety, but it was not the whole extent of the aggravation, for a stage-coach full, inside and out, was meeting them at the moment, and the astonishment of the passengers was very palpably evinced. The congratulations of an Irish family, too, who were keeping up with the chaise, and begging all the time, were of rather a boisterous description; especially those of its male head, who appeared to consider the display as part and parcel of some political, or other procession of triumph.

"Mr. Sawyer!" cried Mr. Pickwick, in a state of great excitement. "Mr. Sawyer, sir!"

"Hallo!" responded that gentleman, looking over the side of the chaise with all the coolness in life.

"Are you mad, sir?" demanded Mr. Pickwick.

"Not a bit of it," replied Bob, "only cheerful."

"Cheerful, sir!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick. "Take down that scandalous red handkerchief, I beg. I insist, sir. Sam, take it down."

Before Sam could interpose, Mr. Bob Sawyer gracefully struck his colors, and having put them in his pocket, nodded in a courteous manner to Mr. Pickwick, wiped the mouth of the case-bottle, and applied it to his own;

thereby informing him, without any unnecessary waste of words, that he devoted that draught to wishing him all manner of happiness and prosperity. Having done this, Bob replaced the cork with great care, and looking benignantly down on Mr. Pickwick, took a large bite out of the sandwich, and smiled.

"Come," said Mr. Pickwick, whose momentary anger was not quite proof against Bob's immovable self-possession, "pray let us have no more of this absurdity."

"No, no," replied Bob, once more exchanging hats with Mr. Weller; "I didn't mean to do it, only I got so enlivened with the ride that I couldn't help it."

"Think of the look of the thing," expostulated Mr. Pickwick; "have some regard to appearances."

"Oh, certainly," said Bob, "it's not the sort of thing at all. All over, governor."

Satisfied with this assurance, Mr. Pickwick once more drew his head into the chaise and pulled up the glass; but he had scarcely resumed the conversation which Mr. Bob Sawyer had interrupted, when he was somewhat startled by the apparition of a small dark body, of an oblong form, on the outside of the window, which gave sundry taps against it, as if impatient of admission.

"What's this?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"It looks like a case-bottle;" remarked Ben Allen, eying the object in question through his spectacles with some interest; "I rather think it belongs to Bob."

The impression was perfectly accurate; for Mr. Bob Sawyer having attached the case-bottle to the end of the walking-stick, was battering the window with it, in token of his wish that his friends inside would partake of its contents, in all good fellowship and harmony.

"What's to be done?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking at

the bottle. "This proceeding is more absurd than the other."

"I think it would be best to take it in," replied Mr. Ben Allen; "it would serve him right to take it in and keep it, wouldn't it?"

"It would," said Mr. Pickwick: "shall I?"

"I think it the most proper course we could possibly adopt," replied Ben.

This advice quite coinciding with his own opinion, Mr. Pickwick gently let down the window and disengaged the bottle from the stick; upon which the latter was drawn up, and Mr. Bob Sawyer was heard to laugh heartily.

"What a merry dog it is!" said Mr. Pickwick, looking round at his companion with the bottle in his hand.

"He is," said Mr. Allen.

"You cannot possibly be angry with him," remarked Mr. Pickwick.

"Quite out of the question," observed Benjamin Allen.

During this short interchange of sentiments, Mr. Pickwick had, in an abstracted mood, uncorked the bottle.

"What is it?" inquired Ben Allen, carelessly.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick, with equal carelessness. "It smells, I think, like milk-punch."

"Oh, indeed!" said Ben.

"I *think* so," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, very properly guarding himself against the possibility of stating an untruth: "mind, I could not undertake to say certainly, without tasting it."

"You had better do so," said Ben; "we may as well know what it is."

"Do you think so?" replied Mr. Pickwick. "Well, if you are curious to know, of course I have no objection."

Ever willing to sacrifice his own feelings to the wishes of his friend, Mr. Pickwick at once took a pretty long taste.

"What is it?" inquired Ben Allen, interrupting him with some impatience.

"Curious," said Mr. Pickwick, smacking his lips, "I hardly know, now. Oh, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, after a second taste, "it *is* punch."

Mr. Ben Allen looked at Mr. Pickwick; Mr. Pickwick looked at Mr. Ben Allen; Mr. Ben Allen smiled; Mr. Pickwick did not.

"It would serve him right," said the last-named gentleman, with some severity, "it would serve him right to drink it every drop."

"The very thing that occurred to me," said Ben Allen.

"Is it indeed!" rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "Then here's his health." With these words, that excellent person took a most energetic pull at the bottle, and handed it to Ben Allen, who was not slow to imitate his example. The smiles became mutual, and the milk-punch was gradually and cheerfully disposed of.

"After all," said Mr. Pickwick, as he drained the last drop, "his pranks are really very amusing — very entertaining indeed."

"You may say that," rejoined Mr. Ben Allen. In proof of Bob Sawyer's being one of the funniest fellows alive, he proceeded to entertain Mr. Pickwick with a long and circumstantial account how that gentleman once drank himself into a fever and got his head shaved; the relation of which pleasant and agreeable history was only stopped by the stoppage of the chaise at the Bell at Berkeley Heath, to change horses.

"I say, we're going to dine here, aren't we?" said Bob, looking in at the window.

"Dine!" said Mr. Pickwick. "Why, we have only come nineteen miles, and have eighty-seven and a half to go."

"Just the reason why we should take something to enable us to bear up against the fatigue," remonstrated Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"Oh, it's quite impossible to dine at half-past eleven o'clock in the day," replied Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch.

"So it is," rejoined Bob, "lunch is the very thing. Hallo, you sir! Lunch for three, directly, and keep the horses back for a quarter of an hour. Tell them to put everything they have cold, on the table, and some bottled ale, — and let us taste your very best Madeira." — Issuing these orders with monstrous importance and bustle, Mr. Bob Sawyer at once hurried into the house to superintend the arrangements; in less than five minutes he returned and declared them to be excellent.

The quality of the lunch fully justified the eulogium which Bob had pronounced, and very great justice was done to it, not only by that gentleman, but Mr. Ben Allen and Mr. Pickwick also. Under the auspices of the three, the bottled ale and the Madeira were promptly disposed of; and when (the horses being once more put to) they resumed their seats, with the case-bottle full of the best substitute for milk-punch that could be procured on so short a notice, the key-bugle sounded, and the red flag waved, without the slightest opposition on Mr. Pickwick's part.

At the Hop Pole at Tewkesbury, they stopped to dine; upon which occasion there was more bottled ale, with some more Madeira, and some Port besides; and here the case-bottle was replenished for the fourth time. Un-

der the influence of these combined stimulants, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Ben Allen fell fast asleep for thirty miles, while Bob and Mr. Weller sung duets in the dickey.

It was quite dark when Mr. Pickwick roused himself sufficiently to look out of the window. The straggling cottages by the road-side, the dingy hue of every object visible, the murky atmosphere, the paths of cinders and brick-dust, the deep-red glow of furnace fires in the distance, the volumes of dense smoke issuing heavily forth from high toppling chimneys, blackening and obscuring everything around; the glare of distant lights, the ponderous wagons which toiled along the road, laden with clashing rods of iron, or piled with heavy goods — all betokened their rapid approach to the great working town of Birmingham.

As they rattled through the narrow thoroughfares leading to the heart of the turmoil, the sights and sounds of earnest occupation struck more forcibly on the senses. The streets were thronged with working-people. The hum of labor resounded from every house; lights gleamed from the long casement windows in the attic stories, and the whirl of wheels and noise of machinery shook the trembling walls. The fires, whose lurid sullen light had been visible for miles, blazed fiercely up, in the great works and factories of the town. The din of hammers, the rushing of steam, and the dead heavy clanking of the engines, was the harsh music which arose from every quarter.

The post-boy was driving briskly through the open streets, and past the handsome and well-lighted shops which intervene between the outskirts of the town and the Old Royal Hotel, before Mr. Pickwick had begun to

consider the very difficult and delicate nature of the commission which had carried him thither.

The delicate nature of this commission, and the difficulty of executing it in a satisfactory manner, were by no means lessened by the voluntary companionship of Mr. Bob Sawyer. Truth to tell, Mr. Pickwick felt that his presence on the occasion, however considerate and gratifying, was by no means an honor he would willingly have sought; in fact, he would cheerfully have given a reasonable sum of money to have had Mr. Bob Sawyer removed to any place of not less than fifty miles' distance, without delay.

Mr. Pickwick had never held any personal communication with Mr. Winkle, senior, although he had once or twice corresponded with him by letter, and returned satisfactory answers to his inquiries concerning the moral character and behavior of his son; he felt nervously sensible that to wait upon him, for the first time, attended by Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen, both slightly fuddled, was not the most ingenious and likely means that could have been hit upon to prepossess him in his favor.

"However," said Mr. Pickwick, endeavoring to reassure himself, "I must do the best I can; I must see him to-night, for I faithfully promised to do so; and if they persist in accompanying me, I must make the interview as brief as possible, and be content to hope that, for their own sakes, they will not expose themselves."

As he comforted himself with these reflections, the chaise stopped at the door of the Old Royal. Ben Allen having been partially awakened from a stupendous sleep, and dragged out by the collar by Mr. Samuel Weller, Mr. Pickwick was enabled to alight. They were shown

to a comfortable apartment, and Mr. Pickwick at once propounded a question to the waiter concerning the whereabout of Mr. Winkle's residence.

"Close by, sir," said the waiter, "not above five hundred yards, sir. Mr. Winkle is a wharfinger, sir, at the canal, sir. Private residence is not — oh dear no, sir, *not* five hundred yards, sir." Here the waiter blew a candle out, and made a feint of lighting it again, in order to afford Mr. Pickwick an opportunity of asking any further questions, if he felt so disposed.

"Take anything now, sir?" said the waiter, lighting the candle in desperation at Mr. Pickwick's silence. "Tea or coffee, sir? dinner, sir?"

"Nothing now."

"Very good, sir. Like to order supper, sir?"

"Not just now."

"*Very* good, sir." Here he walked softly to the door, and then stopping short, turned round, and said, with great suavity:

"Shall I send the chambermaid, gentlemen?"

"You may if you please," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"If *you* please, sir."

"And bring some soda-water," said Bob Sawyer.

"Soda-water, sir? Yes, sir." And with his mind apparently relieved from an overwhelming weight, by having at last got an order for something, the waiter imperceptibly melted away. Waiters never walk or run. They have a peculiar and mysterious power of skimming out of rooms, which other mortals possess not.

Some slight symptoms of vitality having been awakened in Mr. Ben Allen by the soda-water, he suffered himself to be prevailed upon to wash his face

and hands, and to submit to be brushed by Sam. Mr. Pickwick and Bob Sawyer having also repaired the disorder which the journey had made in their apparel, the three started forth, arm in arm, to Mr. Winkle's; Bob Sawyer impregnating the atmosphere with tobacco-smoke as he walked along.

About a quarter of a mile off, in a quiet substantial-looking street, stood an old red-brick house, with three steps before the door, and a brass plate upon it, bearing, in fat Roman capitals, the words, "Mr. Winkle." The steps were very white, and the bricks were very red, and the house was very clean; and here stood Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Benjamin Allen, and Mr. Bob Sawyer, as the clock struck ten.

A smart servant girl answered the knock, and started on beholding the three strangers.

"Is Mr. Winkle at home, my dear?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He is just going to supper, sir," replied the girl.

"Give him that card if you please," rejoined Mr. Pickwick. "Say I am sorry to trouble him at so late an hour; but I am anxious to see him to-night, and have only just arrived."

The girl looked timidly at Mr. Bob Sawyer, who was expressing his admiration of her personal charms by a variety of wonderful grimaces; and casting an eye at the hats and great-coats which hung in the passage, called another girl to mind the door while she went up-stairs. The sentinel was speedily relieved; for the girl returned immediately, and begging pardon of the gentlemen for leaving them in the street, ushered them into a floor-clothed back-parlor, half office and half dressing-room in which the principal useful and ornamental articles of

furniture were, a desk, a wash-hand stand and shaving glass, a boot-rack and boot-jack, a high stool, four chairs, a table, and an old eight-day clock. Over the mantelpiece were the sunken doors of an iron safe, while a couple of hanging shelves for books, an almanac, and several files of dusty papers, decorated the walls.

"Very sorry to leave you standing at the door, sir," said the girl, lighting a lamp, and addressing Mr. Pickwick with a winning smile, "but you was quite strangers to me; and we have such a many trampers that only come to see what they can lay their hands on, that really" ——

"There is not the least occasion for any apology, my dear," said Mr. Pickwick good-humoredly.

"Not the slightest, my love," said Bob Sawyer, playfully stretching forth his arms, and skipping from side to side, as if to prevent the young lady's leaving the room.

The young lady was not at all softened by these allurements, for she at once expressed her opinion that Mr. Bob Sawyer was an "odous creetur;" and, on his becoming rather more pressing in his attentions, imprinted her fair fingers upon his face, and bounced out of the room with many expressions of aversion and contempt.

Deprived of the young lady's society, Mr. Bob Sawyer proceeded to divert himself by peeping into the desk, looking into all the table-drawers, feigning to pick the lock of the iron safe, turning the almanac with its face to the wall, trying on the boots of Mr. Winkle, senior, over his own, and making several other humorous experiments upon the furniture, all of which afforded Mr. Pickwick unspeakable horror and agony, and yielded Mr. Bob Sawyer proportionate delight.

At length the door opened, and a little old gentleman in a snuff-colored suit, with a head and face the precise counterpart of those belonging to Mr. Winkle, junior, excepting that he was rather bald, trotted into the room with Mr. Pickwick's card in one hand, and a silver candlestick in the other.

"Mr. Pickwick, sir, how do you do?" said Winkle the elder, putting down the candlestick and proffering his hand. "Hope I see you well, sir. Glad to see you. Be seated, Mr. Pickwick, I beg, sir. This gentleman is" ——

"My friend Mr. Sawyer," interposed Mr. Pickwick, "your son's friend."

"Oh," said Mr. Winkle the elder, looking rather grimly at Bob. "I hope *you* are well, sir."

"Right as a trivet, sir," replied Bob Sawyer.

"This other gentleman," cried Mr. Pickwick, "is, as you will see when you have read the letter with which I am intrusted, a very near relative, or I should rather say a very particular friend of your son's. His name is Allen."

"*That* gentleman?" inquired Mr. Winkle, pointing with the card towards Ben Allen, who had fallen asleep in an attitude which left nothing of him visible but his spine and his coat-collar.

Mr. Pickwick was on the point of replying to the question, and reciting Mr. Benjamin Allen's name and honorable distinctions at full length, when the sprightly Mr. Bob Sawyer with the view of rousing his friend to a sense of his situation, inflicted a startling pinch upon the fleshy part of his arm, which caused him to jump up with a shriek. Suddenly aware that he was in the presence of a stranger, Mr. Ben Allen advanced and, shaking Mr

Winkle most affectionately by both hands for about five minutes, murmured, in some half-intelligible fragments of sentences, the great delight he felt in seeing him, and a hospitable inquiry, whether he felt disposed to take anything after his walk, or would prefer waiting "till dinner-time;" which done, he sat down and gazed about him with a petrified stare as if he had not the remotest idea where he was, which indeed he had not.

All this was most embarrassing to Mr. Pickwick, the more especially as Mr. Winkle, senior, evinced palpable astonishment at the eccentric — not to say extraordinary — behavior of his two companions. To bring the matter to an issue at once, he drew a letter from his pocket, and presenting it to Mr. Winkle, senior, said:

"This letter, sir, is from your son. Your will see by its contents, that on your favorable and fatherly consideration of it, depend his future happiness and welfare. Will you oblige me by giving it the calmest and coolest perusal, and by discussing the subject afterwards, with me, in the tone and spirit in which alone it ought to be discussed? You may judge of the importance of your decision to your son, and his intense anxiety upon the subject, by my waiting upon you, without any previous warning, at so late an hour; and," added Mr. Pickwick, glancing slightly at his two companions, "and under such unfavorable circumstances."

With this prelude, Mr. Pickwick placed four closely written sides of extra superfine wire-wove penitence in the hands of the astounded Mr. Winkle, senior; and reseating himself in his chair, watched his looks and manner: anxiously, it is true, but with the open front of a gentleman who feels he has taken no part which he need excuse or palliate.

The old wharfinger turned the letter over; looked at the front, back, and sides; made a microscopic examination of the fat little boy on the seal; raised his eyes to Mr. Pickwick's face; and then, seating himself on the high stool, and drawing the lamp closer to him, broke the wax, unfolded the epistle, and lifting it to the light, prepared to read.

Just at this moment, Mr. Bob Sawyer, whose wit had lain dormant for some minutes, placed his hands upon his knees, and made a face after the portraits of the late Mr. Grimaldi, as clown. It so happened that Mr. Winkle, senior, instead of being deeply engaged in reading the letter, as Mr. Bob Sawyer thought, chanced to be looking over the top of it at no less a person than Mr. Bob Sawyer himself; and rightly conjecturing that the face aforesaid was made in ridicule and derision of his own person, he fixed his eyes on Bob with such expressive sternness, that the late Mr. Grimaldi's lineaments gradually resolved themselves into a very fine expression of humility and confusion.

"Did you speak, sir?" inquired Mr. Winkle, senior, after an awful silence.

"No, sir," replied Bob, with no remains of the clown about him, save and except the extreme redness of his cheeks.

"You are sure you did not, sir?" said Mr. Winkle, senior.

"Oh dear! yes, sir, quite," replied Bob.

"I thought you did, sir," rejoined the old gentleman, with indignant emphasis. "Perhaps you *looked* at me, sir?"

"Oh, no! sir, not at all," replied Bob, with extreme civility.

"I am very glad to hear it, sir," said Mr. Winkle, senior. Having frowned upon the abashed Bob with great magnificence, the old gentleman again brought the letter to the light, and began to read it seriously.

Mr. Pickwick eyed him intently as he turned from the bottom line of the first page to the top line of the second, and from the bottom of the second to the top of the third, and from the bottom of the third to the top of the fourth; but not the slightest alteration of countenance afforded a clue to the feelings with which he received the announcement of his son's marriage, which Mr. Pickwick knew was in the very first half-dozen lines.

He read the letter to the last word; folded it again with all the carefulness and precision of a man of business; and, just when Mr. Pickwick expected some great outbreak of feeling, dipped a pen in the inkstand, and said as quietly as if he were speaking on the most ordinary counting-house topic:

"What is Nathaniel's address, Mr. Pickwick?"

"The George and Vulture, at present," replied that gentleman.

"George and Vulture. Where is that?"

"George-Yard, Lombard Street."

"In the City?"

"Yes."

The old gentleman methodically indorsed the address on the back of the letter; and then, placing it in the desk, which he locked, said as he got off the stool and put the bunch of keys in his pocket:

"I suppose there is nothing else which need detain us, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Nothing else, my dear sir!" observed that warm-hearted person in indignant amazement. "Nothing

else! Have you no opinion to express on this momentous event in our young friend's life? No assurance to convey to him, through me, of the continuance of your affection and protection? Nothing to say which will cheer and sustain him, and the anxious girl who looks to him for comfort and support? My dear sir, consider."

"I will consider," replied the old gentleman. "I have nothing to say just now. I am a man of business, Mr. Pickwick; I never commit myself hastily in any affair, and from what I see of this, I by no means like the appearance of it. A thousand pounds is not much, Mr. Pickwick."

"You're very right, sir," interposed Ben Allen, just awake enough to know that he had spent *his* thousand pounds without the smallest difficulty. "You're an intelligent man; Bob, he's a very knowing fellow this."

"I am very happy to find that *you* do me the justice to make the admission, sir," said Mr. Winkle, senior, looking contemptuously at Ben Allen, who was shaking his head profoundly. "The fact is, Mr. Pickwick, that when I gave my son a roving license for a year or so, to see something of men and manners (which he has done under your auspices), so that he might not enter life a mere boarding-school milksop to be gulled by everybody, I never bargained for this. He knows that very well, so if I withdraw my countenance from him on this account, he has no call to be surprised. He shall hear from me, Mr. Pickwick. Good-night, sir. Margaret, open the door."

All this time, Bob Sawyer had been nudging Mr. Ben Allen to say something on the right side; and Ben accordingly now burst, without the slightest preliminary notice, into a brief but impassioned piece of eloquence.

"Sir," said Mr. Ben Allen, staring at the old gentleman, through a pair of very dim and languid eyes, and working his right arm vehemently up and down, "you — you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"As the lady's brother, of course you are an excellent judge of the question," retorted Mr. Winkle, senior. "There; that's enough. Pray say no more, Mr. Pickwick. Good-night, gentlemen!"

With these words the old gentleman took up the candlestick, and opening the room-door, politely motioned towards the passage.

"You will regret this, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, setting his teeth close together to keep down his choler; for he felt how important the effect might prove to his young friend.

"I am at present of a different opinion," calmly replied Mr. Winkle, senior. "Once again, gentlemen, I wish you a good-night."

Mr. Pickwick walked, with angry strides, into the street. Mr. Bob Sawyer, completely quelled by the decision of the old gentleman's manner, took the same course; Mr. Ben Allen's hat rolled down the steps immediately afterwards, and Mr. Ben Allen's body followed it directly. The whole party went silent and supperless to bed; and Mr. Pickwick thought, just before he fell asleep, that if he had known Mr. Winkle, senior, had been quite so much of a man of business, it was extremely probable he might never have waited upon him, on such an errand.

CHAPTER LI.

IN WHICH MR. PICKWICK ENCOUNTERS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE. TO WHICH FORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCE THE READER IS MAINLY INDEBTED FOR MATTER OF THRILLING INTEREST HEREIN SET DOWN, CONCERNING TWO GREAT PUBLIC MEN OF MIGHT AND POWER.

THE morning which broke upon Mr. Pickwick's sight, at eight o'clock, was not at all calculated to elevate his spirits, or to lessen the depression which the unlooked-for result of his embassy inspired. The sky was dark and gloomy, the air damp and raw, the streets wet and sloppy. The smoke hung sluggishly above the chimney-tops as if it lacked the courage to rise, and the rain came slowly and doggedly down, as if it had not even the spirit to pour. A game-cock in the stable-yard, deprived of every spark of his accustomed animation, balanced himself dismally on one leg in a corner; a donkey, moping with drooping head under the narrow roof of an outhouse, appeared from his meditative and miserable countenance to be contemplating suicide. In the street, umbrellas were the only things to be seen, and the clicking of pattens and splashing of rain-drops, the only sounds to be heard.

The breakfast was interrupted by very little conversation; even Mr. Bob Sawyer felt the influence of the

weather, and the previous day's excitement. In his own expressive language, he was "floored." So was Mr. Ben Allen. So was Mr. Pickwick.

In protracted expectation of the weather clearing up, the last evening paper from London was read and re-read with an intensity of interest only known in cases of extreme destitution; every inch of the carpet was walked over, with similar perseverance; the windows were looked out of, often enough to justify the imposition of an additional duty upon them; all kinds of topics of conversation were started, and failed; and at length Mr. Pickwick, when noon had arrived, without a change for the better, rang the bell resolutely and ordered out the chaise.

Although the roads were miry, and the drizzling rain came down harder than it had done yet, and although the mud and wet splashed in at the open windows of the carriage to such an extent that the discomfort was almost as great to the pair of insides as to the pair of outsides, still there was something in the motion, and the sense of being up and doing, which was so infinitely superior to being pent in a dull room, looking at the dull rain dripping into a dull street, that they all agreed, on starting, that the change was a great improvement, and wondered how they could possibly have delayed making it, as long as they had done.

When they stopped to change at Coventry, the steam ascended from the horses in such clouds as wholly to obscure the hostler, whose voice was however heard to declare, from the mist, that he expected the first Gold Medal from the Humane Society on their next distribution of rewards, for taking the post-boy's hat off; the water descending from the brim of which, the invisible gentleman declared must inevitably have drowned him

(the post-boy), but for his great presence of mind in tearing it promptly from his head, and drying the gasping man's countenance with a wisp of straw.

"This is pleasant," said Bob Sawyer, turning up his coat-collar, and pulling the shawl over his mouth to concentrate the fumes of a glass of brandy just swallowed.

"Wery," replied Sam, composedly.

"You don't seem to mind it," observed Bob.

"Vy, I don't exactly see no good my mindin' on it 'ud do, sir," replied Sam.

"That's an unanswerable reason, anyhow," said Bob.

"Yes, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller. "Wotever is, is right, as the young nobleman sweetly remarked wen they put him down in the pension list 'cos his mother's uncle's vife's grandfather vunce lit the king's pipe vith a portable tinder-box."

"Not a bad notion that, Sam," said Mr. Bob Sawyer approvingly.

"Just wot the young nobleman said ev'ry quarter-day arterwards for the rest of his life," replied Mr. Weller.

"Wos you ever called in," inquired Sam, glancing at the driver, after a short silence, and lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper, "wos you ever called in, ven you wos 'prentice to a sawbones, to visit a post-boy?"

"I don't remember that I ever was," replied Bob Sawyer.

"You never see a post-boy in that 'ere hospital as you *walked* (as they says o' the ghosts), did you?" demanded Sam.

"No," replied Bob Sawyer. "I don't think I ever did."

"Never know'd a church-yard were there wos a post-boy's tombstone, or see a dead post-boy, did you?" inquired Sam, pursuing his catechism.

"No," rejoined Bob, "I never did."

"No!" rejoined Sam, triumphantly. "Nor never vill; and there's another thing that no man never see, and that's a dead donkey — no man never see a dead donkey, 'cept the gen'l'm'n in the black silk smalls as know'd the young 'ooman as kept a goat; and that was a French donkey, so wery likely he warn't wun o' the reg'lar breed."

"Well, what has that got to do with the post-boys?" asked Bob Sawyer.

"This here," replied Sam. "Without goin' so far as to as-sert, as some wery sensible people do, that post-boys and donkeys is both immortal, wot I say is this; that wenever they feels theirselves gettin' stiff and past their work, they just rides off together, wun post-boy to a pair, in the usual way; wot becomes on 'em nobody knows, but it's wery probable as they starts avay to take their pleasure in some other vorld, for their a'n't a man alive as ever see, either a donkey or a post-boy, a-takin' his pleasure in this!"

Expatiating upon this learned and remarkable theory, and citing many curious statistical and other facts in its support, Sam Weller beguiled the time until they reached Dunchurch, where a dry post-boy and fresh horses were procured; the next stage was Daventry, and the next Towcester; and at the end of each stage it rained harder than it had done at the beginning.

"I say," remonstrated Bob Sawyer, looking in at the coach-window, as they pulled up before the door of the Saracen's Head, Towcester, "this won't do, you know."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Pickwick, just awakening from a nap, "I'm afraid you are wet."

"Oh you are, are you?" returned Bob. "Yes, I am a little that way — uncomfortably damp, perhaps."

Bob did look dampish, inasmuch as the rain was streaming from his neck, elbows, cuffs, skirts, and knees; and his whole apparel shone so, with the wet, that it might have been mistaken for a full suit of prepared oilskin.

"I *am* rather wet," said Bob, giving himself a shake, and casting a little hydraulic shower around, in so doing, like a Newfoundland dog just emerged from the water.

"I think it's quite impossible to go on to-night," interposed Ben.

"Out of the question, sir," remarked Sam Weller, coming to assist in the conference; "it's cruelty to animals, sir, to ask 'em to do it. There's beds here, sir," said Sam, addressing his master, "everything clean and comfortable. Wery good little dinner, sir, they can get ready in half an hour — pair of fowls, sir, and a weal cutlet; French beans, 'taturs, tart, and tidiness. You'd better stop vere you are, sir, if I might recommend. Take adwice, sir, as the doctor said."

The host of the Saracen's Head opportunely appeared at this moment, to confirm Mr. Weller's statement relative to the accommodations of the establishment, and to back his entreaties with a variety of dismal conjectures regarding the state of the roads, the doubt of fresh horses being to be had at the next stage, the dead certainty of its raining all night, the equally mortal certainty of its clearing up in the morning, and other topics of inducement familiar to innkeepers.

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, "but I must send a letter to London by some conveyance, so that it may be delivered the very first thing in the morning, or I must go forward at all hazards."

The landlord smiled his delight. Nothing could be

easier than for the gentleman to enclose a letter in a sheet of brown paper, and send it on, either by the mail or the night-coach from Birmingham. If the gentleman were particularly anxious to have it left as soon as possible, he might write outside, "To be delivered immediately," which was sure to be attended to; or "pay the bearer half-a-crown extra for instant delivery," which was surer still.

"Very well," said Mr. Pickwick, "then we will stop here."

"Lights in the Sun, John; make up the fire — the gentlemen are wet!" — cried the landlord. "This way, gentlemen; don't trouble yourself about the post-boy now, sir; I'll send him to you when you ring for him, sir. Now John, the candles!"

The candles were brought, the fire was stirred up, and a fresh log of wood thrown on. In ten minutes' time, a waiter was laying the cloth for dinner, the curtains were drawn, the fire was blazing brightly, and everything looked (as everything always does, in all decent English inns) as if the travellers had been expected, and their comforts prepared, for days beforehand.

Mr. Pickwick sat down at a side-table, and hastily indited a note to Mr. Winkle, merely informing him that he was detained by stress of weather, but would certainly be in London next day; until when, he deferred any account of his proceedings. This note was hastily made into a parcel and despatched to the bar per Mr. Samuel Weller.

Sam left it with the landlady, and was returning to pull his master's boots off, after drying himself by the kitchen-fire, when, glancing casually through a half-opened door, he was arrested by the sight of a gentle-

man with a sandy head, who had a large bundle of newspapers lying on the table before him, and was perusing the leading article of one with a settled sneer which curled up his nose and all his other features into a majestic expression of haughty contempt.

"Hallo!" said Sam, "I ought to know that 'ere head and them features; the eye-glass, too, and the broad-brimmed tile! Eatansvill to vit, or I'm a Roman."

Sam was taken with a troublesome cough, at once, for the purpose of attracting the gentleman's attention; the gentleman starting at the sound, raised his head and his eye-glass, and disclosed to view the profound and thoughtful features of Mr. Pott, of the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Sam, advancing with a bow, "my master's here, Mr. Pott."

"Hush, hush!" cried Pott, drawing Sam into the room, and closing the door, with a countenance of mysterious dread and apprehension.

"Wot's the matter, sir?" inquired Sam, looking vacantly about him.

"Not a whisper of my name," replied Pott; "this is a buff neighborhood. If the excited and irritable populace knew I was here, I should be torn to pieces."

"No! vould you, sir?" inquired Sam.

"I should be the victim of their fury," replied Pott. "Now, young man, what of your master?"

"He's a-stoppin' here to-night on his vay to town, vith a couple of friends," replied Sam.

"Is Mr. Winkle one of them?" inquired Pott, with a slight frown.

"No, sir; Mr. Vinkle stops at home now," rejoined Sam. "He's married."

"Married!" exclaimed Pott, with frightful vehemence. He stopped, smiled darkly, and added, in a low, vindictive tone, "It serves him right!"

Having given vent to this cruel ebullition of deadly malice and cold-blooded triumph over a fallen enemy, Mr. Pott inquired whether Mr. Pickwick's friends were "blue;" receiving a most satisfactory answer in the affirmative from Sam, who knew as much about the matter as Pott himself, he consented to accompany him to Mr. Pickwick's room, where a hearty welcome awaited him, and an agreement to club their dinners together was at once made and ratified.

"And how are matters going on in Eatanswill?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, when Pott had taken a seat near the fire, and the whole party had got their wet boots off, and dry slippers on. "Is the Independent still in being?"

"The Independent, sir," replied Pott, "is still dragging on a wretched and lingering career. Abhorred and despised by even the few who are cognizant of its miserable and disgraceful existence; stifled by the very filth it so profusely scatters; rendered deaf and blind by the exhalations of its own slime; the obscene journal, happily unconscious of its degraded state, is rapidly sinking beneath that treacherous mud which, while it seems to give it a firm standing with the low and debased classes of society, is, nevertheless, rising above its detested head, and will speedily ingulf it forever."

Having delivered this manifesto (which formed a portion of his last week's leader) with vehement articulation, the editor paused to take breath, and looked majestically at Bob Sawyer.

"You are a young man, sir," said Pott.

Mr. Bob Sawyer nodded.

"So are you sir," said Pott, addressing Mr. Ben Allen.

Ben admitted the soft impeachment.

"And are both deeply imbued with those blue principles which so long as I live, I have pledged myself to the people of these kingdoms to support and to maintain?" suggested Pott.

"Why, I don't exactly know about that," replied Bob Sawyer. "I am" —

"Not buff, Mr. Pickwick," interrupted Pott, drawing back his chair, "your friend is not buff, sir?"

"No, no," rejoined Bob, "I'm a kind of plaid at present; a compound of all sorts of colors."

"A waverer," said Pott, solemnly, "a waverer. I should like to show you a series of eight articles, sir, that have appeared in the Eatanswill Gazette. I think I may venture to say that you would not be long in establishing your opinions on a firm and solid blue basis, sir."

"I dare say I should turn very blue, long before I got to the end of them," responded Bob.

Mr. Pott looked dubiously at Bob Sawyer for some seconds, and, turning to Mr. Pickwick, said:

"You have seen the literary articles which have appeared at intervals in the Eatanswill Gazette in the course of the last three months, and which have excited such general — I may say such universal — attention and admiration?"

"Why," replied Mr. Pickwick, slightly embarrassed by the question, "the fact is, I have been so much engaged in other ways, that I really have not had an opportunity of perusing them."

"You should do so, sir," said Pott, with a severe countenance.

"I will," said Mr. Pickwick.

"They appeared in the form of a copious review of a work on Chinese metaphysics, sir," said Pott.

"Oh," observed Mr. Pickwick; "from your pen, I hope?"

"From the pen of my critic, sir," rejoined Pott, with dignity.

"An abstruse subject, I should conceive," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very, sir," responded Pott, looking intensely sage. "He *crammed* for it, to use a technical but expressive term; he read up for the subject, at my desire, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick; "I was not aware that that valuable work contained any information respecting Chinese metaphysics."

"He read, sir," rejoined Pott, laying his hand on Mr. Pickwick's knee, and looking round with a smile of intellectual superiority; "he read for metaphysics under the letter M, and for China under the letter C; and combined his information, sir!"

Mr. Pott's features assumed so much additional grandeur at the recollection of the power and research displayed in the learned effusions in question, that some minutes elapsed before Mr. Pickwick felt emboldened to renew the conversation; at length, as the Editor's countenance gradually relaxed into its customary expression of moral supremacy, he ventured to resume the discourse by asking:

"Is it fair to inquire what great object has brought you so far from home?"

"That object which actuates and animates me in all my gigantic labors, sir," replied Pott, with a calm smile; "my country's good."

"I supposed it was some public mission," observed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, sir," resumed Pott, "it is." Here, bending towards Mr. Pickwick, he whispered in a deep hollow voice, "A buff ball, sir, will take place in Birmingham to-morrow evening."

"God bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, sir, and supper," added Pott.

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick.

Pott nodded portentously.

Now, although Mr. Pickwick feigned to stand aghast at this disclosure, he was so little versed in local politics that he was unable to form an adequate comprehension of the importance of the dire conspiracy it referred to; observing which, Mr. Pott, drawing forth the last number of the Eatanswill Gazette, and referring to the same, delivered himself of the following paragraph:

"Hole-and-Corner Buffery.

"A reptile contemporary has recently sweltered forth his black venom in the vain and hopeless attempt of sullying the fair name of our distinguished and excellent representative, the Honorable Mr. Slumkey—that Slumkey, whom we, long before he gained his present noble and exalted position, predicted would one day be, as he now is, at once his country's brightest honor, and her proudest boast: alike her bold defender and her honest pride—our reptile contemporary, we say, has made himself merry at the expense of a superbly embossed plated coal-scuttle, which has been presented to that glorious

man by his enraptured constituents, and towards the purchase of which, the nameless wretch insinuates, the Honorable Mr. Slumkey himself contributed, through a confidential friend of his butler's, more than three fourths of the whole sum subscribed. Why, does not the crawling creature see, that even if this be the fact, the Honorable Mr. Slumkey only appears in a still more amiable and radiant light than before, if that be possible? Does not even *his* obtuseness perceive that this amiable and touching desire to carry out the wishes of the constituent body, must forever endear him to the hearts and souls of such of his fellow-townsmen as are not worse than swine; or, in other words, who are not as debased as our contemporary himself? But such is the wretched trickery of hole-and-corner Buffery! These are not its only artifices. Treason is abroad. We boldly state, now that we are goaded to the disclosure, and we throw ourselves on the country and its constables for protection — we boldly state that secret preparations are at this moment in progress for a Buff ball; which is to be held in a Buff town, in the very heart and centre of a Buff population; which is to be conducted by a Buff master of the ceremonies; which is to be attended by four ultra Buff members of parliament, and the admission to which, is to be by Buff tickets! Does our fiendish contemporary wince? Let him writhe, in impotent malice, as we pen the words, WE WILL BE THERE."

"There, sir," said Pott, folding up the paper quite exhausted, "that is the state of the case!"

The landlord and waiter entering at the moment with dinner, caused Mr. Pott to lay his finger on his lips, in token that he considered his life in Mr. Pickwick's hands, and depended on his secrecy. Messrs. Bob Sawyer and

Benjamin Allen, who had irreverently fallen asleep during the reading of the quotation from the Eatanswill Gazette, and the discussion which followed it, were roused by the mere whispering of the talismanic word "Dinner" in their ears; and to dinner they went with good digestion waiting on appetite, and health on both, and a waiter on all three.

In the course of the dinner and the sitting which succeeded it, Mr. Pott descending, for a few moments, to domestic topics, informed Mr. Pickwick that the air of Eatanswill not agreeing with his lady, she was then engaged in making a tour of different fashionable watering-places with a view to the recovery of her wonted health and spirits; this was a delicate veiling of the fact that Mrs. Pott, acting upon her often repeated threat of separation, had, in virtue of an arrangement negotiated by her brother, the Lieutenant, and concluded by Mr. Pott, permanently retired with the faithful body-guard upon one moiety or half-part of the annual income and profits arising from the editorship and sale of the Eatanswill Gazette.

While the great Mr. Pott was dwelling upon this and other matters, enlivening the conversation from time to time with various extracts from his own lucubrations, a stern stranger, calling from the window of a stage-coach, outward bound, which halted at the inn to deliver packages, requested to know, whether, if he stopped short on his journey and remained there for the night, he could be furnished with the necessary accommodation of a bed and bedstead.

"Certainly, sir," replied the landlord.

"I can, can I?" inquired the stranger, who seemed habitually suspicious in look and manner.

"No doubt of it, sir," replied the landlord.

"Good," said the stranger. "Coachman, I get down here. Guard, my carpet-bag!"

Bidding the other passengers good-night, in a rather snappish manner, the stranger alighted. He was a short-ish gentleman, with very stiff black hair, cut in the porcupine or blacking-brush style, and standing stiff and straight all over his head; his aspect was pompous and threatening; his manner was peremptory; his eyes were sharp and restless; and his whole bearing bespoke a feeling of great confidence in himself, and a consciousness of immeasurable superiority over all other people.

This gentleman was shown into the room originally assigned to the patriotic Mr. Pott; and the waiter remarked, in dumb astonishment at the singular coincidence, that he had no sooner lighted the candles than the gentleman, diving into his hat, drew forth a newspaper, and began to read it with the very same expression of indignant scorn, which, upon the majestic features of Pott, had paralyzed his energies an hour before. The man observed too, that whereas Mr. Pott's scorn had been roused by a newspaper headed the Eatanswill Independent, this gentleman's withering contempt was awakened by a newspaper entitled The Eatanswill Gazette.

"Send the landlord," said the stranger.

"Yes, sir," rejoined the waiter.

The landlord was sent, and came.

"Are you the landlord?" inquired the gentleman.

"I am, sir," replied the landlord.

"Do you know me?" demanded the gentleman.

"I have not that pleasure, sir," rejoined the landlord

"My name is Slurk," said the gentleman.

The landlord slightly inclined his head.

"Slurk, sir," repeated the gentleman, haughtily. "Do you know me now, man?"

The landlord scratched his head, looked at the ceiling, and at the stranger, and smiled feebly.

"Do you know me, man?" inquired the stranger, angrily.

The landlord made a strong effort, and at length replied, "Well, sir, I do *not* know you."

"Great Heaven!" said the stranger, dashing his clenched fist upon the table. "And this is popularity!"

The landlord took a step or two towards the door; the stranger, fixing his eyes upon him, resumed.

"This," said the stranger, "this is gratitude for years of labor and study in behalf of the masses. I alight wet and weary; no enthusiastic crowds press forward to greet their champion; the church-bells are silent; the very name elicits no responsive feeling in their torpid bosoms. It is enough," said the agitated Mr. Slurk, pacing to and fro, "to curdle the ink in one's pen, and induce one to abandon their cause forever."

"Did you say brandy and water, sir?" said the landlord, venturing a hint.

"Rum," said Mr. Slurk, turning fiercely upon him. "Have you got a fire anywhere?"

"We can light one directly, sir," said the landlord.

"Which will throw out no heat until it is bedtime," interrupted Mr. Slurk. "Is there anybody in the kitchen?"

Not a soul. There was a beautiful fire. Everybody had gone, and the door was closed for the night.

"I will drink my rum and water," said Mr. Slurk, "by the kitchen-fire." So, gathering up his hat and newspaper, he stalked solemnly behind the landlord to that

humble apartment, and throwing himself on a settle by the fireside, resumed his countenance of scorn, and began to read and drink in silent dignity.

Now some demon of discord, flying over the Saracen's Head at that moment, on casting down his eyes in mere idle curiosity, happened to behold Slurk established comfortably by the kitchen-fire, and Pott slightly elevated with wine in another room; upon which, the malicious demon, darting down into the last-mentioned apartment with inconceivable rapidity, passed at once into the head of Mr. Bob Sawyer, and prompted him for his (the demon's) own evil purposes to speak as follows:

"I say, we've let the fire out. It's uncommonly cold after the rain, isn't it?"

"It really is," replied Mr. Pickwick, shivering.

"It wouldn't be a bad notion to have a cigar by the kitchen-fire, would it?" said Bob Sawyer, still prompted by the demon aforesaid.

"It would be particularly comfortable, *I* think," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Mr. Pott, what do you say?"

Mr. Pott yielded a ready assent; and all four travellers, each with his glass in his hand, at once betook themselves to the kitchen, with Sam Weller heading the procession to show them the way.

The stranger was still reading; he looked up and started. Mr. Pott started.

"What's the matter?" whispered Mr. Pickwick.

"That reptile!" replied Pott.

"What reptile?" said Mr. Pickwick, looking about him for fear he should tread on some overgrown black beetle, or dropsical spider.

"That reptile," whispered Pott, catching Mr. Pickwick by the arm, and pointing towards the stranger. "That reptile — Slurk, of the Independent!"

"Perhaps we had better retire," whispered Mr. Pickwick.

"Never, sir," rejoined Pott, — pot-valiant in a double sense — "never." With these words, Mr. Pott took up his position on an opposite settle, and selecting one from a little bundle of newspapers, began to read against his enemy.

Mr. Pott, of course, read the Independent, and Mr. Slurk, of course, read the Gazette; and each gentleman audibly expressed his contempt of the other's compositions by bitter laughs and sarcastic sniffs; whence they proceeded to more open expressions of opinion, such as "absurd," — "wretched," "atrocity," "humbug," "knavery," "dirt," "filth," "slime," "ditch-water," and other critical remarks of the like nature.

Both Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Ben Allen had beheld these symptoms of rivalry and hatred, with a degree of delight which imparted great additional relish to the cigars at which they were puffing most vigorously. The moment they began to flag, the mischievous Mr. Bob Sawyer, addressing Slurk with great politeness, said:

"Will you allow me to look at your paper, sir, when you have quite done with it?"

"You'll find very little to repay you for your trouble in this contemptible *thing*, sir," replied Slurk, bestowing a Satanic frown on Pott.

"You shall have this presently," said Pott, looking up, pale with rage, and quivering in his speech, from the same cause. "Ha! ha! you will be amused with this *fellow's* audacity."

Terrific emphasis was laid upon "thing" and "fellow;" and the faces of both editors began to glow with defiance.

"The ribaldry of this miserable man is despicably disgusting," said Pott, pretending to address Bob Sawyer, and scowling upon Slurk.

Here, Mr. Slurk laughed very heartily, and folding the paper so as to get at a fresh column conveniently, said, that the blockhead really amused him.

"What an impudent blunderer this fellow is," said Pott, turning from pink to crimson.

"Did you ever read any of this man's foolery, sir?" inquired Slurk, of Bob Sawyer.

"Never," replied Bob; "is it very bad?"

"Oh, shocking! shocking!" rejoined Slurk.

"Really! Dear me, this is too atrocious!" exclaimed Pott, at this juncture; still feigning to be absorbed in his reading.

"If you can wade through a few sentences of malice, meanness, falsehood, perjury, treachery, and cant," said Slurk, handing the paper to Bob, "you will, perhaps, be somewhat repaid by a laugh at the style of this ungrammatical twaddler."

"What's that you said, sir?" inquired Pott, looking up, trembling all over with passion.

"What's that to you, sir?" replied Slurk.

"Ungrammatical twaddler, was it, sir?" said Pott.

"Yes, sir, it was," replied Slurk; "and *blue bore*, sir, if you like that better; ha! ha!"

Mr. Pott retorted not a word to this jocose insult, but deliberately folding up his copy of the Independent, flattened it carefully down, crushed it beneath his boot, spat upon it with great ceremony, and flung it into the fire.

"There, sir," said Pott, retreating from the stove, "and that's the way I would serve the viper who produces it, if

I were not, fortunately for him, restrained by the laws of my country."

"Serve him so, sir!" cried Slurk, starting up: "those laws shall never be appealed to by him, sir, in such a case. Serve him so, sir!"

"Hear! hear!" said Bob Sawyer.

"Nothing can be fairer," observed Mr. Ben Allen.

"Serve him so, sir!" reiterated Slurk, in a loud voice.

Mr. Pott darted a look of contempt, which might have withered an anchor.

"Serve him so, sir!" reiterated Slurk, in a louder voice than before.

"I will not, sir," rejoined Pott.

"Oh, you won't! won't you, sir?" said Mr. Slurk, in a taunting manner; "you hear this, gentlemen! He won't; not that he's afraid; oh, no! he *won't*. Ha! ha!"

"I consider you, sir," said Mr. Pott, moved by this sarcasm, "I consider you a viper. I look upon you, sir, as a man who has placed himself beyond the pale of society, by his most audacious, disgraceful, and abominable public conduct. I view you, sir, personally or politically, in no other light than as a most unparalleled and unmitigated viper."

The indignant Independent did not wait to hear the end of this personal denunciation; for, catching up his carpet-bag which was well stuffed with movables, he swung it in the air as Pott turned away, and, letting it fall with a circular sweep on his head, just at that particular angle of the bag where a good thick hair-brush happened to be packed, caused a sharp crash to be heard throughout the kitchen, and brought him at once to the ground.

"Gentlemen," cried Mr. Pickwick, as Pott started up and seized the fire-shovel, "gentlemen! Consider for Heaven's sake — help — Sam — here — pray, gentlemen — interfere, somebody."

Uttering these incoherent exclamations, Mr. Pickwick rushed between the infuriated combatants just in time to receive the carpet-bag on one side of his body, and the fire-shovel on the other. Whether the representatives of the public feeling of Eatanswill were blinded by animosity, or, being both acute reasoners, saw the advantage of having a third party between them to bear all the blows, certain it is that they paid not the slightest attention to Mr. Pickwick, but defying each other with great spirit, plied the carpet-bag and the fire-shovel most fearlessly. Mr. Pickwick would unquestionably have suffered severely from his humane interference, if Mr. Weller, attracted by his master's cries, had not rushed in at the moment and, snatching up a meal-sack, effectually stopped the conflict by drawing it over the head and shoulders of the mighty Pott, and clasping him tight round the elbows.

"Take avay that 'ere bag from the t'other madman," said Sam to Ben Allen and Bob Sawyer, who had done nothing but dodge round the group, each with a tortoise-shell lancet in his hand, ready to bleed the first man stunned. "Give it up, you wretched little creetur, or I'll smother you in it."

Awed by these threats, and quite out of breath, the Independent suffered himself to be disarmed; and Mr. Weller removing the extinguisher from Pott, set him free with a caution.

"You take yourselves off to bed quietly," said Sam, "or I'll put you both in it, and let you fight it out vith the mouth tied, as I vould a dozen sich, if they played

these games. And you have the goodness to come this here vay, sir, if you please."

Thus addressing his master, Sam took him by the arm, and led him off, while the rival editors were severally removed to their beds by the landlord, under the inspection of Mr. Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Benjamin Allen; breathing, as they went away, many sanguinary threats, and making vague appointments for mortal combat next day. When they came to think it over, however, it occurred to them that they could do it much better in print, so they recommenced deadly hostilities without delay; and all Eatanswill rung with their boldness — on paper.

They had taken themselves off in separate coaches, early next morning, before the other travellers were stirring; and the weather having now cleared up, the chaise companions once more turned their faces to London.

CHAPTER LII.

INVOLVING A SERIOUS CHANGE IN THE WELLER FAMILY, AND THE UNTIMELY DOWNFALL OF THE RED-NOSED MR. STIGGINS.

CONSIDERING it a matter of delicacy to abstain from introducing either Bob Sawyer or Ben Allen to the young couple, until they were fully prepared to expect them; and wishing to spare Arabella's feelings as much as possible; Mr. Pickwick proposed that he and Sam should alight in the neighborhood of the George and Vulture, and that the two young men should, for the present, take up their quarters elsewhere. To this, they very readily agreed, and the proposition was accordingly acted upon: Mr. Ben Allen and Mr. Bob Sawyer betaking themselves to a sequestered pot-shop on the remotest confines of the Borough: behind the bar-door of which their names had in other days very often appeared, at the head of long and complex calculations worked in white chalk.

"Dear me, Mr. Weller," said the pretty house-maid, meeting Sam at the door.

"Dear *me* I vish it wos, my dear," replied Sam, dropping behind, to let his master get out of hearing. "Wot a sweet-lookin' creetur you are, Mary!"

"Lor, Mr. Weller, what nonsense you do talk!" said Mary. "Oh! *don't*, Mr. Weller."

"Don't what, my dear?" said Sam.

"Why, that," replied the pretty house-maid. "Lor, do get along with you." Thus admonishing him, the pretty house-maid smilingly pushed Sam against the wall, declaring that he had tumbled her cap, and put her hair quite out of curl.

"And prevented what I was going to say, besides," added Mary. "There's a letter been waiting here for you four days; you hadn't been gone away, half an hour, when it came; and more than that, it's got, immediate, on the outside."

"Vere is it, my love?" inquired Sam.

"I took care of it for you, or I dare say it would have been lost, long before this," replied Mary. "There, take it; it's more than you deserve."

With these words, after many pretty little coquettish doubts and fears, and wishes that she might not have lost it, Mary produced the letter from behind the nicest little muslin tucker possible, and handed it to Sam, who thereupon kissed it with much gallantry and devotion.

"My goodness me!" said Mary, adjusting the tucker, and feigning unconsciousness, "you seem to have grown very fond of it all at once."

To this Mr. Weller only replied by a wink, the intense meaning of which no description could convey the faintest idea of; and, sitting himself down beside Mary on a window-seat, opened the letter and glanced at the contents.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Sam, "wot's all this?"

"Nothing the matter, I hope?" said Mary, peeping over his shoulder.

"Bless them eyes o' yourn," said Sam, looking up.

"Never mind my eyes; you had much better read

your letter," said the pretty house-maid; and as she said so, she made the eyes twinkle with such slyness and beauty that they were perfectly irresistible.

Sam refreshed himself with a kiss, and read as follows:

Markis Gran
By dorken
Wens^dy.

"My dear Sammle,

"I am wery sorry to have the plessure of bein a Bear of ill news your Mother in law cort cold consekens of imprudently settin too long on the damp grass in the rain a hearin of a shepherd who warnt able to leave off till late at night owen to his havin vound his-self up vith brandy and vater and not being able to stop his-self till he got a little sober which took a many hours to do the doctor says that if she'd svallo'd varm brandy and vater artervards insted of afore she mightn't have been no vus her veels wos immedetly greased and everythink done to set her agoin as could be inwented your farther had hopes as she vould have vorked round as usual but just as she wos a turnen the corner my boy she took the wrong road and vent down hill vith a welocity you never see and notvithstandin that the drag wos put on directly by the medikel man it wornt of no use at all for she paid the last pike at twenty minutes afore six o'clock yesterday evenin havin done the jouney wery much under the reglar time vich praps was partly owen to her haven taken in wery little luggage by the vay your father says that if you vill come and see me Sammy he vill take it as a wery great favor for I am wery lonely Samivel n b he *vill* have it spelt that vay vich I say ant right and as there is sich a many things to settle he is sure your guvner wont object of

course he vill not Sammy for I knows him better so he sends his dooty in which I join and am Samivel infernally yours

"TONY VELLER."

"Wot a incomprehensible letter," said Sam; "who's to know wot it means, vith all this he-ing and I-ing! It a'n't my father's writin' 'cept this here signater in print letters; that's his."

"Perhaps he got somebody to write it for him, and signed it himself afterwards," said the pretty house-maid.

"Stop a minit," replied Sam, running over the letter again, and pausing here and there, to reflect, as he did so. "You've hit it. The gen'l'm'n as wrote it, wos a-tellin' all about the misfortun' in a proper vay, and then my father comes a-lookin' over him, and complicates the whole concern by puttin' his oar in. That's just the wery sort o' thing he'd do. You're right, Mary, my dear."

Having satisfied himself upon this point, Sam read the letter all over, once more, and, appearing to form a clear notion of its contents for the first time, ejaculated thoughtfully, as he folded it up:

"And so the poor creatur's dead! I'm sorry for it. She warn't a bad disposed 'ooman if them shepherds had let her alone. I'm wery sorry for it."

Mr. Weller uttered these words in so serious a manner, that the pretty house-maid cast down her eyes and looked very grave.

"Hows'ever," said Sam, putting the letter in his pocket, with a gentle sigh, "it wos to be — and wos, as the old lady said arter she'd married the footman. Can't be helped now, can it, Mary?"

Mary shook her head, and sighed too.

"I must apply it to the hemperor for leave of absence," said Sam.

Mary sighed again, — the letter was so very affecting.

"Good-by!" said Sam.

"Good-by," rejoined the pretty house-maid, turning her head away.

"Well, shake hands, won't you?" said Sam.

The pretty house-maid put out a hand which, although it was a house-maid's, was a very small one, and rose to go.

"I shan't be wery long avay," said Sam.

"You're always away," said Mary, giving her head the slightest possible toss in the air. "You no sooner come, Mr. Weller, than you go again."

Mr. Weller drew the household beauty closer to him, and entered upon a whispering conversation, which had not proceeded far, when she turned her face round and condescended to look at him again. When they parted, it was somehow or other indispensably necessary for her to go to her room, and arrange the cap and curls before she could think of presenting herself to her mistress; which preparatory ceremony she went off to perform, bestowing many nods and smiles on Sam, over the banisters as she tripped up-stairs.

"I shan't be avay more than a day or two, sir, at farthest," said Sam, when he had communicated to Mr. Pickwick the intelligence of his father's loss.

"As long as may be necessary, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "you have my full permission to remain."

Sam bowed.

"You will tell your father, Sam, that if I can be of

any assistance to him in his present situation, I shall be most willing and ready to lend him any aid in my power," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Thank'ee, sir," rejoined Sam. "I'll mention it, sir."

And with some expressions of mutual good-will and interest, master and man separated.

It was just seven o'clock when Samuel Weller, alighting from the box of a stage-coach which passed through Dorking, stood within a few hundred yards of the Marquis of Granby. It was a cold dull evening; the little street looked dreary and dismal; and the mahogany countenance of the noble and gallant Marquis seemed to wear a more sad and melancholy expression than it was wont to do, as it swung to and fro, creaking mournfully in the wind. The blinds were pulled down, and the shutters partly closed; of the knot of loungers that usually collected about the door, not one was to be seen; the place was silent and desolate.

Seeing nobody of whom he could ask any preliminary questions, Sam walked softly in. Glancing round, he quickly recognized his parent in the distance.

The widower was seated at a small round table in the little room behind the bar, smoking a pipe, with his eyes intently fixed upon the fire. The funeral had evidently taken place that day; for attached to his hat, which he still retained on his head, was a hat-band measuring about a yard-and-a-half in length, which hung over the top rail of the chair and streamed negligently down. Mr. Weller was in a very abstracted and contemplative mood; for, notwithstanding that Sam called him by name several times, he still continued to smoke with the same fixed and quiet countenance, and was only roused ultimately by his son's placing the palm of his hand on his shoulder.

"Sammy," said Mr. Weller, "you're welcome."

"I've been a-callin' to you half-a-dozen times," said Sam, hanging his hat on a peg, "but you didn't hear me."

"No, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, again looking thoughtfully at the fire. "I wos in a referee, Sammy."

"Wot about?" inquired Sam, drawing his chair up to the fire.

"In a referee, Sammy," replied the elder Mr. Weller, "regarding *her*, Samivel." Here Mr. Weller jerked his head in the direction of Dorking church-yard, in mute explanation that his words referred to the late Mrs. Weller.

"I wos a-thinkin', Sammy," said Mr. Weller, eying his son, with great earnestness, over his pipe, as if to assure him that however extraordinary and incredible the declaration might appear, it was nevertheless calmly and deliberately uttered, "I wos a-thinkin', Sammy, that upon the whole I wos wery sorry she wos gone."

"Vell, and so you ought to be," replied Sam.

Mr. Weller nodded his acquiescence in the sentiment, and again fastening his eyes on the fire, shrouded himself in a cloud and mused deeply.

"Those wos wery sensible observations as she made, Sammy," said Mr. Weller driving the smoke away with his hand, after a long silence.

"Wot observations?" inquired Sam.

"Them as she made, arter she was took ill," replied the old gentleman.

"Wot wos they?"

"Somethin' to this here effect. 'Veller,' she says, 'I'm afeard I've not done by you quite wot I ought to have done; you're a wery kind-hearted man, and I might ha'

made your home more comfortabler. I begin to see now,' she says, 'ven it's too late, that if a married 'ooman vishes to be religious, she should begin vith dischargin' her dooties at home, and makin' them as is about her cheerful and happy, and that vile she goes to church, or chapel, or wot not, at all proper times, she should be wery careful not to con-wert this sort o' thing into a excuse for idleness or self-indulgence. I *have* done this,' she says, 'and I've vasted time and substance on them as has done it more than me; but I hope ven I'm gone, Veller, that you'll think on me as I wos afore I know'd them people, and as I raly wos by natur'.' 'Susan,' says I, — I wos took up very short by this, Samivel; I von't deny it, my boy — 'Susan,' I says, 'you've been a wery good vife to me, altogether; don't say nothin' at all about it; keep a good heart my dear; and you'll live to see me punch that 'ere Stiggins's head yet.' She smiled at this, Samivel," said the old gentleman, stifling a sigh with his pipe, "but she died arter all!"

"Vell," said Sam, venturing to offer a little homely consolation, after the lapse of three or four minutes, consumed by the old gentleman in slowly shaking his head from side to side, and solemnly smoking; "vell, gov'ner, ve must all come to it, one day or another."

"So we must, Sammy," said Mr. Weller the elder.

"There's a Providence in it all," said Sam.

"O' course there is," replied his father with a nod of grave approval. "Wot 'ud become of the undertakers vithout it, Sammy?"

Lost in the immense field of conjecture opened by this reflection, the elder Mr. Weller laid his pipe on the table, and stirred the fire with a meditative visage.

While the old gentleman was thus engaged, a very

buxom-looking cook, dressed in mourning, who had been bustling about, in the bar, glided into the room, and bestowing many smirks of recognition upon Sam, silently stationed herself at the back of his father's chair, and announced her presence by a slight cough: the which, being disregarded, was followed by a louder one.

"Hallo!" said the elder Mr. Weller, dropping the poker as he looked round, and hastily drew his chair away. "Wot's the matter now?"

"Have a cup of tea, there's a good soul," replied the buxom female, coaxingly.

"I von't," replied Mr. Weller, in a somewhat boisterous manner, "I'll see you" — Mr. Weller hastily checked himself, and added in a low tone, "furder fust."

"Oh, dear, dear; how adversity does change people!" said the lady, looking upwards.

"It's the only thing 'twixt this and the doctor as shall change *my* condition," muttered Mr. Weller.

"I really never saw a man so cross," said the buxom female.

"Never mind — it's all for my own good; vich is the reflection vith wich the penitent school-boy comforted his feelin's ven they flogged him," rejoined the old gentleman.

The buxom female shook her head with a compassionate and sympathizing air; and, appealing to Sam, inquired whether his father really ought not to make an effort to keep up, and not give way to that lowness of spirits.

"You see, Mr. Samuel," said the buxom female, "as I was telling him yesterday, he *will* feel lonely, he can't expect but what he should, sir, but he should keep up a good heart, because, dear me, I'm sure we all pity his

loss, and are ready to do anything for him; and there's no situation in life so bad, Mr. Samuel, that it can't be mended. Which is what a very worthy person said to me when my husband died." Here the speaker, putting her hand before her mouth, coughed again, and looked affectionately at the elder Mr. Weller.

"As I don't rekvire any o' your conversation just now, mum, vill you have the goodness to re-tire?" inquired Mr. Weller in a grave and steady voice.

"Well, Mr. Weller," said the buxom female, "I'm sure I only spoke to you out of kindness."

"Wery likely, mum," replied Mr. Weller. "Samivel, show the lady out, and shut the door arter her."

This hint was not lost upon the buxom female; for she at once left the room, and slammed the door behind her, upon which Mr. Weller, senior, falling back in his chair in a violent perspiration, said:

"Sammy, if I wos to stop here alone vun veek — only vun veek, my boy — that 'ere 'ooman 'ud marry me by force and wiolence afore it was over."

"Wot! Is she so wery fond on you?" inquired Sam.

"Fond!" replied his father, "I can't keep her avay from me. If I was locked up in a fire-proof chest vith a patent Brahmin, she'd find means to get at me, Sammy."

"Wot a thing it is, to be so sought arter!" observed Sam, smiling.

"I don't take no pride out on it, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, poking the fire vehemently, "it's a horrid sitiwation. I'm actiwally drove out o' house and home by it. The breath was scarcely out o' your poor mother-in-law's body, ven vun old 'ooman sends me a pot o' jam, and another a pot o' jelly, and another brews a blessed large

jug o' camomile-tea, vich she brings in vith her own hands." Mr. Weller paused with an aspect of intense disgust, and, looking round, added in a whisper, "They wos all widders, Sammy, all on 'em, 'cept the camomile-tea vun, as wos a single young lady o' fifty-three."

Sam gave a comical look in reply, and the old gentleman having broken an obstinate lump of coal, with a countenance expressive of as much earnestness and malice as if it had been the head of one of the widows last-mentioned, said:

"In short, Sammy, I feel that I a'n't safe anyveres but on the box."

"How are you safer there than anyveres else?" interrupted Sam.

"'Cos a coachman's a privileged indiwidual," replied Mr. Weller, looking fixedly at his son. "'Cos a coachman may do vithout suspicion wot other men may not; 'cos a coachman may be on the wery amicablest terms with eighty mile o' females, and yet nobody think that he ever means to marry any vun among 'em. And wot other man can say the same, Sammy?"

"Vell, there's somethin' in that," said Sam.

"If your gov'ner had been a coachman," reasoned Mr. Weller, "do you s'pose as that 'ere jury 'ud ever ha' conwicted him, s'posin' it possible that the matter could ha' gone to that extremity? They dusn't ha' done it."

"Wy not?" said Sam, rather disparagingly.

"Wy not!" rejoined Mr. Weller; "'cos it 'ud ha' gone ag'in' their consciences. A reg'lar coachman's a sort o' connectin' link betvixt singleness and matrimony, and every practicable man knows it."

"Wot! You mean they're gen'ral fav'rites, and nobody takes adwantage on 'em, p'raps!" said Sam.

His father nodded.

"How it ever come to that 'ere pass," resumed the parent Weller, "I can't say. Wy it is that long-stage coachmen possess such insiniwations, and is always looked up to — a-dored I may say — by ev'ry young 'ooman in ev'ry town he vurks through, I don't know. I only know that so it is; it's a reg'lation of natur' — a dispensary, as your poor mother-in-law used to say."

"A dispensation," said Sam, correcting the old gentleman.

"Wery good, Samivel, a dispensation if you like it better," returned Mr. Weller; "*I* call it a dispensary, and it's always writ up so, at the places vere they gives you physic for nothin' in your own bottles; that's all."

With these words Mr. Weller refilled and relighted his pipe, and once more summoning up a meditative expression of countenance, continued as follows:

"Therefore, my boy, as I do not see the adwisability o' stoppin' here to be marrid vether I vant to or not, and as at the same time I do not vish to separate myself from them interestin' members of society altogether, I have come to the determination o' drivin' the Safety, and puttin' up vunce more at the Bell Savage, vich is my nat'ral-born element, Sammy."

"And wot's to become o' the bis'ness?" inquired Sam.

"The bis'ness, Samivel," replied the old gentleman, "good-vill, stock, and fixters, vill be sold by private contract; and out o' the money, two hundred pound, agreeable to a rekvest o' your mother-in-law's to me, a little afore she died, vill be inwested in your name in — wot do you call them things again?"

"Wot things?" inquired Sam.

"Them things as is always a-goin' up and down in the City."

"Omn'buses?" suggested Sam.

"Nonsense," replied Mr. Weller. "Them things as is alvays a-fluctooatin', and gettin' theirselves inwolved somehow or another vith the national debt, and the 'chequers bills, and all that."

"Oh! the funds," said Sam.

"Ah!" rejoined Mr. Weller, "the fun's; two hundred pound o' the money is to be inwested for you, Samivel, in the fun's; four and a half per cent. reduced counsels, Sammy."

"Wery kind o' the old lady to think o' me," said Sam, "and I'm wery much obliged to her."

"The rest vill be inwested in my name," continued the elder Mr. Weller; "and ven I'm took off the road, it'll come to you, so take care you don't spend it all at vunst, my boy, and mind that no widder gets a inklin' o' your fortun', or you're done."

Having delivered this warning, Mr. Weller resumed his pipe with a more serene countenance; the disclosure of these matters appearing to have eased his mind considerably.

"Somebody's a-tappin' at the door," said Sam.

"Let 'em tap," replied his father, with dignity.

Sam acted upon the direction. There was another tap, and another, and then a long row of taps; upon which Sam inquired why the tapper was not admitted.

"Hush," whispered Mr. Weller, with apprehensive looks, "don't take no notice on 'em, Sammy, it's vun o' the widders, p'raps."

No notice being taken of the taps, the unseen visitor, after a short lapse, ventured to open the door and peep in. It was no female head that was thrust in at the partially opened door, but the long black locks and red

face of Mr. Stiggins. Mr. Weller's pipe fell from his hands.

The reverend gentleman gradually opened the door by almost imperceptible degrees, until the aperture was just wide enough to admit of the passage of his lank body, when he glided into the room and closed it after him with great care and gentleness. Turning towards Sam, and raising his hands and eyes in token of the unspeakable sorrow with which he regarded the calamity that had befallen the family, he carried the high-backed chair to his old corner by the fire, and seating himself in the very edge, drew forth a brown pocket-handkerchief, and applied the same to his optics.

While this was going forward, the elder Mr. Weller sat back in his chair, with his eyes wide open, his hands planted on his knees, and his whole countenance expressive of absorbing and overwhelming astonishment. Sam sat opposite him in perfect silence, waiting, with eager curiosity, for the termination of the scene.

Mr. Stiggins kept the brown pocket-handkerchief before his eyes for some minutes, moaning decently meanwhile, and then, mastering his feelings by a strong effort, put it in his pocket and buttoned it up. After this, he stirred the fire; after that, he rubbed his hands and looked at Sam.

"Oh my young friend," said Mr. Stiggins, breaking the silence in a very low voice, "here's a sorrowful affliction!"

Sam nodded, very slightly.

"For the man of wrath, too!" added Mr. Stiggins; "it makes a vessel's heart bleed!"

Mr. Weller was overheard by his son to murmur something relative to making a vessel's nose bleed; but Mr. Stiggins heard him not.

"Do you know, young man," whispered Mr. Stiggins, drawing his chair closer to Sam, "whether she has left Emanuel anything?"

"Who's he?" inquired Sam.

"The chapel," replied Mr. Stiggins; "our chapel; our fold, Mr. Samuel."

"She hasn't left the fold nothin', nor the shepherd nothin', nor the animals nothin'," said Sam, decisively; "nor the dogs neither."

Mr. Stiggins looked slyly at Sam; glanced at the old gentleman, who was sitting with his eyes closed, as if asleep; and drawing his chair still nearer, said,

"Nothing for *me*, Mr. Samuel?"

Sam shook his head.

"I think there's something," said Stiggins, turning as pale as he could turn. "Consider, Mr. Samuel; no little token?"

"Not so much as the vurth o' that 'ere old umbrella o' yourn," replied Sam.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Stiggins, hesitatingly, after a few moments' deep thought, "perhaps she recommended me to the care of the man of wrath, Mr. Samuel?"

"I think that's wery likely, from what he said," rejoined Sam; "he wos a-speakin' about you, jist now."

"Was he, though?" exclaimed Stiggins, brightening up. "Ah! He's changed, I dare say. We might live very comfortably together now, Mr. Samuel, eh? I could take care of his property when you are away—good care, you see."

Heaving a long-drawn sigh, Mr. Stiggins paused for a response. Sam nodded, and Mr. Weller, the elder, gave vent to an extraordinary sound, which, being neither a

groan, nor a grunt, nor a gasp, nor a growl, seemed to partake in some degree of the character of all four.

Mr. Stiggins, encouraged by this sound, which he understood to betoken remorse or repentance, looked about him, rubbed his hands, wept, smiled, wept again, and then, walking softly across the room to a well-remembered shelf in one corner, took down a tumbler, and, with great deliberation, put four lumps of sugar in it. Having got thus far, he looked about him again, and sighed grievously; with that, he walked softly into the bar, and presently returning with the tumbler half full of pine-apple rum, advanced to the kettle which was singing gayly on the hob, mixed his grog, stirred it, sipped it, sat down, and taking a long and hearty pull at the rum and water, stopped for breath.

The elder Mr. Weller, who still continued to make various strange and uncouth attempts to appear asleep, offered not a single word during these proceedings; but when Mr. Stiggins stopped for breath, he darted upon him, and snatching the tumbler from his hand, threw the remainder of the rum and water in his face, and the glass itself into the grate. Then, seizing the reverend gentleman firmly by the collar, he suddenly fell to kicking him most furiously: accompanying every application of his top-boots to Mr. Stiggins's person with sundry violent and incoherent anathemas upon his limbs, eyes, and body.

"Sammy," said Mr. Weller, "put my hat on tight for me."

Sam dutifully adjusted the hat with the long hat-band more firmly on his father's head, and the old gentleman, resuming his kicking with greater agility than before, tumbled with Mr. Stiggins through the bar, and through

the passage, out at the front door, and so into the street; — the kicking continuing the whole way, and increasing in vehemence, rather than diminishing, every time the top-boot was lifted.

It was a beautiful and exhilarating sight to see the red-nosed man writhing in Mr. Weller's grasp, and his whole frame quivering with anguish as kick followed kick in rapid succession; it was a still more exciting spectacle to behold Mr. Weller, after a powerful struggle, immersing Mr. Stiggins's head in a horse-trough full of water, and holding it there, until he was half suffocated.

"There!" said Mr. Weller, throwing all his energy into one most complicated kick, as he at length permitted Mr. Stiggins to withdraw his head from the trough, "send any vun o' them lazy shepherds here, and I'll pound him to a jelly first, and drownd him artervards! Sammy, help me in, and fill me a small glass of brandy. I'm out o' breath, my boy."

CHAPTER LIII.

COMPRISING THE FINAL EXIT OF MR. JINGLE AND JOB TROTTER; WITH A GREAT MORNING OF BUSINESS IN GRAY'S INN SQUARE. CONCLUDING WITH A DOUBLE KNOCK AT MR. PERKER'S DOOR.

When Arabella, after some gentle preparation, and many assurances that there was not the least occasion for being low-spirited, was at length made acquainted by Mr. Pickwick with the unsatisfactory result of his visit to Birmingham, she burst into tears, and sobbing aloud, lamented in moving terms that she should have been the unhappy cause of any estrangement between a father and his son.

"My dear girl," said Mr. Pickwick, kindly, "it is no fault of yours. It was impossible to foresee that the old gentleman would be so strongly prepossessed against his son's marriage, you know. I am sure," added Mr. Pickwick, glancing at her pretty face, "he can have very little idea of the pleasure he denies himself."

"Oh my dear Mr. Pickwick," said Arabella, "what shall we do, if he continues to be angry with us."

"Why, wait patiently, my dear, until he thinks better of it," replied Mr. Pickwick, cheerfully.

"But, dear Mr. Pickwick, what is to become of Nathaniel if his father withdraws his assistance?" urged Arabella.

"In that case, my love," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, "I will venture to prophesy that he will find some other friend who will not be backward in helping him to start in the world."

The significance of this reply was not so well disguised by Mr. Pickwick but that Arabella understood it. So, throwing her arms round his neck, and kissing him affectionately, she sobbed louder than before.

"Come, come," said Mr. Pickwick, taking her hand, "we will wait here a few days longer, and see whether he writes or takes any other notice of your husband's communication. If not, I have thought of half a dozen plans, any one of which would make you happy at once. There, my dear — there!"

With these words, Mr. Pickwick gently pressed Arabella's hand, and bade her dry her eyes, and not distress her husband. Upon which, Arabella, who was one of the best little creatures alive, put her handkerchief in her reticule, and by the time Mr. Winkle joined them, exhibited, in full lustre, the same beaming smiles and sparkling eyes that had originally captivated him.

"This is a distressing predicament for these young people," thought Mr. Pickwick, as he dressed himself next morning. "I'll walk up to Perker's, and consult him about the matter."

As Mr. Pickwick was further prompted to betake himself to Gray's Inn Square by an anxious desire to come to a pecuniary settlement with the kind-hearted little attorney without further delay, he made a hurried breakfast, and executed his intention so speedily that ten o'clock had not struck when he reached Gray's Inn.

It still wanted ten minutes to the hour when he had

ascended the staircase on which Perker's chambers were The clerks had not arrived yet, and he beguiled the time by looking out of the staircase window.

The healthy light of a fine October morning made even the dingy old houses brighten up a little: some of the dusty windows actually looking almost cheerful as the sun's rays gleamed upon them. Clerk after clerk hastened into the square by one or other of the entrances, and looking up at the Hall clock, accelerated or decreased his rate of walking according to the time at which his office hours nominally commenced; the half-past nine o'clock people suddenly becoming very brisk, and the ten o'clock gentlemen falling into a pace of most aristocratic slowness. The clock struck ten, and clerks poured in faster than ever, each one in a greater perspiration than his predecessor. The noise of unlocking and opening doors echoed and reëchoed on every side; heads appeared as if by magic in every window; the porters took up their stations for the day; the slipshod laundresses hurried off, the postman ran from house to house; and the whole legal hive was in a bustle.

"You're early, Mr. Pickwick," said a voice behind him.

"Ah, Mr. Lowten," replied that gentleman, looking round, and recognizing his old acquaintance.

"Precious warm walking, isn't it?" said Lowten, drawing a Bramah key from his pocket, with a small plug therein, to keep the dust out.

"You appear to feel it so," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, smiling at the clerk, who was literally red-hot.

"I've come along rather, I can tell you," replied Lowten. "It went the half hour as I came through the Polygon. I'm here before *him*, though, so I don't mind."

Comforting himself with this reflection, Mr. Lowten extracted the plug from the door-key; and having opened the door, replugged and repocketed his Bramah, and picked up the letters which the postman had dropped through the box, he ushered Mr. Pickwick into the office. Here, in the twinkling of an eye, he divested himself of his coat, put on a threadbare garment which he took out of a desk, hung up his hat, pulled forth a few sheets of cartridge and blotting-paper in alternate layers, and sticking a pen behind his ear, rubbed his hands with an air of great satisfaction.

"There you see, Mr. Pickwick," he said, "now I'm complete. I've got my office-coat on, and my pad out, and let him come as soon as he likes. You haven't got a pinch of snuff about you, have you?"

"No, I have not," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"I'm sorry for it," said Lowten. "Never mind — I'll run out presently, and get a bottle of soda. Don't I look rather queer about the eyes, Mr. Pickwick?"

The individual appealed to, surveyed Mr. Lowten's eyes from a distance, and expressed his opinion that no unusual queerness was perceptible in those features.

"I'm glad of it," said Lowten. "We were keeping it up pretty tolerably at the Stump last night, and I'm rather out of sorts this morning. — Perker's been about that business of yours, by the by."

"What business?" inquired Mr. Pickwick — "Mrs. Bardell's costs?"

"No, I don't mean that," replied Lowten. "About getting that customer, that we paid the ten shillings in the pound to the bill discounter for, on your account — to get him out of the Fleet, you know — about getting him to Demerara."

"Oh, Mr. Jingle," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. "Yes. Well?"

"Well, it's all arranged," said Lowten, mending his pen. "The agent at Liverpool said he had been obliged to you many times when you were in business, and he would be glad to take him on your recommendation."

"That's well," said Mr. Pickwick. "I am delighted to hear it."

"But I say," resumed Lowten, scraping the back of the pen preparatory to making a fresh split, "*what* a soft chap that other is!"

"Which other?"

"Why, that servant, or friend, or whatever he is — you know; Trotter."

"Ah?" said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile. "I always thought him the reverse."

"Well, and so did I, from what little I saw of him," replied Lowten, "it only shows how one may be deceived. What do you think of *his* going to Demerara, too?"

"What! And giving up what was offered him here!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Treating Perker's offer of eighteen bob a-week, and a rise if he behaved himself, like dirt," replied Lowten. "He said he must go along with the other one, and so they persuaded Perker to write again, and they've got him something on the same estate; not near so good, Perker says, as a convict would get in New South Wales, if he appeared at his trial in a new suit of clothes."

"Foolish fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, with glistening eyes. "Foolish fellow."

"Oh, it's worse than foolish; it's downright sneaking,

you know," replied Lowten, nibbing the pen with a contemptuous face. "He says that he's the only friend he ever had, and he's attached to him, and all that. Friendship's a very good thing in its way; we are all very friendly and comfortable at the Stump, for instance, over our grog, where every man pays for himself; but damn hurting yourself for anybody else, you know! No man should have more than two attachments — the first, to number one, and the second to the ladies; that's what I say — ha! ha!" Mr. Lowten concluded with a loud laugh, half in jocularity, and half in derision, which was prematurely cut short by the sound of Perker's footsteps on the stairs: at the first approach of which, he vaulted on his stool with an agility most remarkable, and wrote intensely.

The greeting between Mr. Pickwick and his professional adviser was warm and cordial; the client was scarcely ensconced in the attorney's arm-chair, however, when a knock was heard at the door, and a voice inquired whether Mr. Perker was within.

"Hark!" said Perker, "that's one of our vagabond friends — Jingle himself, my dear sir. Will you see him?"

"What do you think?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, hesitating.

"Yes, I think you had better. Here, you sir, what's your name, walk in, will you?"

In compliance with this unceremonious invitation, Jingle and Job walked into the room, but, seeing Mr. Pickwick, stopped short in some confusion.

"Well," said Perker, "don't you know that gentleman?"

"Good reason to," replied Jingle, stepping forward.

"Mr. Pickwick — deepest obligations — life preserver — made a man of me — you shall never repent it, sir."

"I am happy to hear you say so," said Mr. Pickwick. "You look much better."

"Thanks to you, sir — great change — Majesty's fleet — unwholesome place — very," said Jingle, shaking his head. He was decently and cleanly dressed, and so was Job, who stood bolt upright behind him, staring at Mr. Pickwick with a visage of iron.

"When do they go to Liverpool?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, half aside to Perker.

"This evening, sir, at seven o'clock," said Job, taking one step forward. "By the heavy coach from the city, sir."

"Are your places taken?"

"They are, sir," replied Job.

"You have fully made up your mind to go?"

"I have, sir," answered Job.

"With regard to such an outfit as was indispensable for Jingle," said Perker, addressing Mr. Pickwick aloud, "I have taken upon myself to make an arrangement for the deduction of a small sum from his quarterly salary, which, being made for only one year, and regularly remitted, will provide for that expense. I entirely disapprove of your doing anything for him, my dear sir, which is not dependent on his own exertions and good conduct."

"Certainly," interposed Jingle, with great firmness. "Clear head — man of the world — quite right — perfectly."

"By compounding with his creditor, releasing his clothes from the pawnbroker's, relieving him in prison, and paying for his passage," continued Perker, without

noticing Jingle's observation, "you have already lost upwards of fifty pounds."

"Not lost," said Jingle, hastily. "Pay it all — stick to business — cash up — every farthing. Yellow fever, perhaps — can't help that — if not" — Here Mr. Jingle paused, and striking the crown of his hat with great violence, passed his hand over his eyes and sat down.

"He means to say," said Job, advancing a few paces, "that if he is not carried off by the fever, he will pay the money back again. If he lives, he will, Mr. Pickwick. I will see it done. I know he will, sir," said Job, with energy. "I could undertake to swear it."

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick, who had been bestowing a score or two of frowns upon Perker, to stop his summary of benefits conferred, which the little attorney obstinately disregarded, "you must be careful not to play any more desperate cricket matches, Mr. Jingle, or to renew your acquaintance with Sir Thomas Blazo, and I have little doubt of your preserving your health."

Mr. Jingle smiled at this sally, but looked rather foolish notwithstanding; so, Mr. Pickwick changed the subject by saying,

"You don't happen to know, do you, what has become of another friend of yours — a more humble one, whom I saw at Rochester?"

"Dismal Jemmy?" inquired Jingle.

"Yes."

Jingle shook his head,

"Clever rascal — queer fellow, hoaxing genius — Job's brother."

"Job's brother!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick. "Well, now I look at him closely, there *is* a likeness."

"We were always considered like each other, sir," said Job, with a cunning look just lurking in the corners of his eyes, "only I was really of a serious nature, and he never was. He emigrated to America, sir, in consequence of being too much sought after here, to be comfortable; and has never been heard of since."

"That accounts for my not having received the 'page from the romance of real life,' which he promised me one morning when he appeared to be contemplating suicide on Rochester Bridge, I suppose," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling. "I need not inquire whether his dismal behavior was natural or assumed."

"He could assume anything, sir," said Job. "You may consider yourself very fortunate in having escaped him so easily. On intimate terms he would have been even a more dangerous acquaintance than"— Job looked at Jingle, hesitated, and finally added, "than — than — myself even."

"A hopeful family yours, Mr. Trotter," said Perker, sealing a letter which he had just finished writing.

"Yes, sir," replied Job. "Very much so."

"Well," said the little man, laughing; "I hope you are going to disgrace it. Deliver this letter to the agent when you reach Liverpool, and let me advise you, gentlemen, not to be too knowing in the West Indies. If you throw away this chance, you will both richly deserve to be hanged, as I sincerely trust you will be. And now you had better leave Mr. Pickwick and me alone, for we have other matters to talk over, and time is precious." As Perker said this, he looked towards the door, with an evident desire to render the leave-taking as brief as possible.

It was brief enough on Mr. Jingle's part. He thanked

the little attorney in a few hurried words for the kindness and promptitude with which he had rendered his assistance, and, turning to his benefactor, stood for a few seconds as if irresolute what to say or how to act. Job Trotter relieved his perplexity; for, with a humble, grateful bow to Mr. Pickwick, he took his friend gently by the arm, and led him away.

"A worthy couple!" said Perker, as the door closed behind them.

"I hope they may become so," replied Mr. Pickwick. "What do you think? Is there any chance of their permanent reformation?"

Perker shrugged his shoulders doubtfully, but observing Mr. Pickwick's anxious and disappointed look, rejoined:

"Of course there is a chance. I hope it may prove a good one. They are unquestionably penitent now; but then, you know, they have the recollection of very recent suffering fresh upon them. What they may become, when that fades away, is a problem that neither you nor I can solve. However, my dear sir," added Perker, laying his hand on Mr. Pickwick's shoulder, "your object is equally honorable, whatever the result is. Whether that species of benevolence which is so very cautious and long-sighted that it is seldom exercised at all, lest its owner should be imposed upon, and so wounded in his self-love, be real charity, or a worldly counterfeit, I leave to wiser heads than mine to determine. But if those two fellows were to commit a burglary to-morrow, my opinion of this action would be equally high."

With these remarks, which were delivered in a much more animated and earnest manner than is usual in legal

gentlemen, Perker drew his chair to his desk, and listened to Mr. Pickwick's recital of old Mr. Winkle's obstinacy.

"Give him a week," said Perker, nodding his head prophetically.

"Do you think he will come round?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I think he will," rejoined Perker. "If not, we must try the young lady's persuasion; and that is what anybody but you, would have done at first."

Mr. Perker was taking a pinch of snuff with various grotesque contractions of countenance, eulogistic of the persuasive powers appertaining unto young ladies, when the murmur of inquiry and answer was heard in the outer office, and Lowten tapped at the door.

"Come in!" cried the little man.

The clerk came in, and shut the door after him, with great mystery.

"What's the matter?" inquired Perker.

"You're wanted, sir."

"Who wants me?"

Lowten looked at Mr. Pickwick, and coughed.

"Who wants me? can't you speak, Mr. Lowten?"

"Why, sir," replied Lowten, "it's Dodson; and Fogg is with him."

"Bless my life!" said the little man, looking at his watch, "I appointed them to be here, at half-past eleven, to settle that matter of yours, Pickwick. I gave them an undertaking on which they sent down your discharge; it's very awkward, my dear sir; what will you do? Would you like to step into the next room?"

The next room being the identical room in which Messrs. Dodson and Fogg were, Mr. Pickwick replied

that he would remain where he was: the more especially as Messrs. Dodson and Fogg ought to be ashamed to look him in the face, instead of his being ashamed to see them; which latter circumstance he begged Mr. Perker to note, with a glowing countenance and many marks of indignation.

"Very well, my dear sir, very well," replied Perker, "I can only say, that if you expect either Dodson or Fogg to exhibit any symptom of shame or confusion at having to look you, or anybody else, in the face, you are the most sanguine man in your expectations that *I* ever met with. Show them in, Mr. Lowten."

Mr. Lowten disappeared with a grin, and immediately returned ushering in the firm, in due form of precedence: Dodson first, and Fogg afterwards.

"You have seen Mr. Pickwick, I believe?" said Perker to Dodson, inclining his pen in the direction where that gentleman was seated.

"How do you do, Mr. Pickwick?" said Dodson in a loud voice.

"Dear me," cried Fogg, "how do you do, Mr. Pickwick? I hope you are well, sir. I thought I knew the face," said Fogg, drawing up a chair, and looking round him with a smile.

Mr. Pickwick bent his head, very slightly, in answer to these salutations, and, seeing Fogg pull a bundle of papers from his coat-pocket, rose and walked to the window.

"There's no occasion for Mr. Pickwick to move, Mr. Perker," said Fogg, untying the red tape which encircled the little bundle, and smiling again, more sweetly than before. "Mr. Pickwick is pretty well acquainted with these proceedings; there are no secrets between us, I think. He! he! he!"

"Not many, I think," said Dodson. "Ha! ha! ha!" Then both the partners laughed together — pleasantly and cheerfully, as men who are going to receive money, often do.

"We shall make Mr. Pickwick pay for peeping," said Fogg with considerable native humor, as he unfolded his papers. "The amount of the taxed costs is one hundred and thirty-three, six, four, Mr. Perker."

There was a great comparing of papers, and turning over of leaves, by Fogg and Perker, after this statement of profit and loss, during which Dodson said in an affable manner to Mr. Pickwick:

"I don't think you are looking quite so stout as when I had the pleasure of seeing you last, Mr. Pickwick."

"Possibly not, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, who had been flashing forth looks of fierce indignation, without producing the smallest effect on either of the sharp practitioners; "I believe I am not, sir. I have been persecuted and annoyed by Scoundrels of late, sir."

Perker coughed violently, and asked Mr. Pickwick whether he wouldn't like to look at the morning paper; to which inquiry Mr. Pickwick returned a most decided negative.

"True," said Dodson, "I dare say you *have* been annoyed in the Fleet; there are some odd gentry there. Whereabouts were your apartments, Mr. Pickwick?"

"My one room," replied that much-injured gentleman, "was on the Coffee-Room flight."

"Oh, indeed!" said Dodson. "I believe that it is a very pleasant part of the establishment."

"Very," replied Mr. Pickwick dryly.

There was a coolness about all this, which, to a gentleman of an excitable temperament, had, under the cir-

cumstances, rather an exasperating tendency. Mr. Pickwick restrained his wrath by gigantic efforts; but when Perker wrote a check for the whole amount, and Fogg deposited it in a small pocket-book, with a triumphant smile playing over his pimply features, which communicated itself likewise to the stern countenance of Dodson, he felt the blood in his cheeks tingling with indignation.

"Now Mr. Dodson," said Fogg, putting up the pocket-book and drawing on his gloves, "I am at your service."

"Very good," said Dodson, rising, "I am quite ready."

"I am very happy," said Fogg, softened by the check, "to have had the pleasure of making Mr. Pickwick's acquaintance. I hope you don't think quite so badly of us, Mr. Pickwick, as when we first had the pleasure of seeing you."

"I hope not," said Dodson, with the high tone of calumniated virtue. "Mr. Pickwick now knows us better, I trust; whatever your opinion of gentlemen of our profession may be, I beg to assure you, sir, that I bear no ill-will or vindictive feeling towards you for the sentiments you thought proper to express in our office in Freeman's Court, Cornhill, on the occasion to which my partner has referred."

"Oh no, no; nor I," said Fogg, in a most forgiving manner.

"Our conduct, sir," said Dodson, "will speak for itself, and justify itself I hope, upon every occasion. We have been in the profession some years, Mr. Pickwick, and have been honored with the confidence of many excellent clients. I wish you good-morning, sir."

"*Good*-morning, Mr. Pickwick," said Fogg; so saying he put his umbrella under his arm, drew off his right

glove, and extended the hand of reconciliation to that most indignant gentleman: who, thereupon, thrust his hands beneath his coat-tails, and eyed the attorney with looks of scornful amazement.

"Lowten!" cried Perker at this moment, "open the door."

"Wait one instant," said Mr. Pickwick, "Perker, I *will* speak."

"My dear sir, pray let the matter rest where it is," said the little attorney, who had been in a state of nervous apprehension during the whole interview; "Mr. Pickwick, I beg" —

"I will not be put down, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick hastily. "Mr. Dodson, you have addressed some remarks to me."

Dodson turned round, bent his head meekly, and smiled.

"Some remarks to me," repeated Mr. Pickwick, almost breathless: "and your partner has tendered me his hand, and you have both assumed a tone of forgiveness and high-mindedness, which is an extent of impudence that I was not prepared for, even in you."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Dodson.

"What, sir!" reiterated Fogg.

"Do you know that I have been the victim of your plots and conspiracies?" continued Mr. Pickwick. "Do you know that I am the man whom you have been imprisoning and robbing? Do you know that you were the attorneys for the plaintiff, in Bardell and Pickwick?"

"Yes, sir, we do know it," replied Dodson.

"Of course we know it, sir," rejoined Fogg, slapping his pocket — perhaps by accident.

"I see that you recollect it with satisfaction," said

Mr. Pickwick, attempting to call up a sneer for the first time in his life, and failing most signally in so doing. "Although I have long been anxious to tell you, in plain terms, what my opinion of you is, I should have let even this opportunity pass, in deference to my friend Perker's wishes, but for the unwarrantable tone you have assumed, and your insolent familiarity — I say insolent familiarity, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, turning upon Fogg with a fierceness of gesture which caused that person to retreat towards the door with great expedition.

"Take care, sir," said Dodson, who although he was the biggest man of the party, had prudently intrenched himself behind Fogg, and was speaking over his head with a very pale face. "Let him assault you, Mr. Fogg; don't return it on any account."

"No, no, I won't return it," said Fogg, falling back a little more as he spoke; to the evident relief of his partner, who, by these means, was gradually getting into the outer office.

"You are," continued Mr. Pickwick, resuming the thread of his discourse, "you are a well-matched pair of mean, rascally, pettifogging robbers."

"Well," interposed Perker, "is that all?"

"It is all summed up in that," rejoined Mr. Pickwick; "they are mean, rascally, pettifogging robbers."

"There!" said Perker, in a most conciliatory tone. "My dear sirs, he has said all he has to say: now pray go. Lowten, *is* that door open?"

Mr. Lowten, with a distant giggle, replied in the affirmative.

"There, there — good-morning — good-morning — now pray, my dear sirs, — Mr. Lowten, the door!" cried the little man, pushing Dodson and Fogg, nothing loath, out

of the office, "this way, my dear sirs, — now pray don't prolong this — dear me — Mr. Lowten — the door, sir — why don't you attend?"

"If there's law in England, sir," said Dodson, looking towards Mr. Pickwick, as he put on his hat, "you shall smart for this."

"You are a couple of mean" —

"Remember, sir, you pay dearly for this," said Fogg.

— "Rascally, pettifogging robbers!" continued Mr. Pickwick, taking not the least notice of the threats that were addressed to him.

"Robbers!" cried Mr. Pickwick, running to the stair-head, as the two attorneys descended.

"Robbers!" shouted Mr. Pickwick, breaking from Lowten and Perker, and thrusting his head out of the staircase window.

When Mr. Pickwick drew in his head again, his countenance was smiling and placid; and, walking quietly back into the office, he declared that he had now removed a great weight from his mind, and that he felt perfectly comfortable and happy.

Perker said nothing at all until he had emptied his snuff-box, and sent Lowten out to fill it, when he was seized with a fit of laughing, which lasted for five minutes; at the expiration of which time he said that he supposed he ought to be very angry, but he couldn't think of the business seriously yet — when he could, he would be.

"Well, now," said Mr. Pickwick, "let me have a settlement with you."

"Of the same kind as the last?" inquired Perker with another laugh.

"Not exactly," rejoined Mr. Pickwick, drawing out

his pocket-book, and shaking the little man heartily by the hand, "I only mean a pecuniary settlement. You have done me many acts of kindness that I can never repay, and have no wish to, for I prefer continuing the obligation."

With this preface, the two friends dived into some very complicated accounts and vouchers, which, having been duly displayed and gone through by Perker, were at once discharged by Mr. Pickwick, with many professions of esteem and friendship.

They had no sooner arrived at this point, than a most violent and startling knocking was heard at the door: it was not an ordinary double knock, but a constant and uninterrupted succession of the loudest single raps, as if the knocker were endowed with the perpetual motion, or the person outside had forgotten to leave off.

"Dear me, what's that!" exclaimed Perker, starting.

"I think it is a knock at the door," said Mr. Pickwick, as if there could be the smallest doubt of the fact!

The knocker made a more energetic reply than words could have yielded, for it continued to hammer with surprising force and noise, without a moment's cessation.

"Dear me!" said Perker, ringing his bell, "we shall alarm the Inn.—Mr. Lowten, don't you hear a knock?"

"I'll answer the door in one moment, sir," replied the clerk.

The knocker appeared to hear the response, and to assert that it was quite impossible he could wait so long. It made a stupendous uproar.

"It's quite dreadful," said Mr. Pickwick, stopping his ears.

"Make haste, Mr. Lowten," Perker called out, "we shall have the panels beaten in."

Mr. Lowten, who was washing his hands in a dark closet, hurried to the door, and turning the handle, beheld the appearance which is described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER LIV.

CONTAINING SOME PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO THE DOUBLE KNOCK, AND OTHER MATTERS, AMONG WHICH CERTAIN INTERESTING DISCLOSURES RELATIVE TO MR. SNODGRASS AND A YOUNG LADY ARE BY NO MEANS IRRELEVANT TO THIS HISTORY.

THE object that presented itself to the eyes of the astonished clerk was a boy — a wonderfully fat boy — habited as a serving lad, standing upright on the mat, with his eyes closed as if in sleep. He had never seen such a fat boy, in or out of a travelling caravan ; and this, coupled with the utter calmness and repose of his appearance, so very different from what was reasonably to have been expected of the inflicter of such knocks, smote him with wonder.

"What's the matter?" inquired the clerk.

The extraordinary boy replied not a word ; but he nodded once, and seemed, to the clerk's imagination, to snore feebly.

"Where do you come from?" inquired the clerk.

The boy made no sign. He breathed heavily, but in all other respects was motionless.

The clerk repeated the question thrice, and receiving no answer, prepared to shut the door, when the boy suddenly opened his eyes, winked several times, sneezed

once, and raised his hand as if to repeat the knocking. Finding the door open, he stared about him with astonishment, and at length fixed his eyes on Mr. Lowten's face.

"What the devil do you knock in that way for?" inquired the clerk, angrily.

"Which way?" said the boy, in a slow, sleepy voice.

"Why, like forty hackney-coachmen," replied the clerk.

"Because master said, I wasn't to leave off knocking till they opened the door, for fear I should go to sleep," said the boy.

"Well," said the clerk, "what message have you brought?"

"He's down-stairs," rejoined the boy.

"Who?"

"Master. He wants to know whether you're at home."

Mr. Lowten bethought himself, at this juncture, of looking out of the window. Seeing an open carriage, with a hearty old gentleman in it, looking up very anxiously, he ventured to beckon him; on which, the old gentleman jumped out directly.

"That's your master in the carriage, I suppose?" said Lowten.

The boy nodded.

All further inquiries were superseded by the appearance of old Wardle, who, running up-stairs and just recognizing Lowten, passed at once into Mr. Perker's room.

"Pickwick!" said the old gentleman, "your hand, my boy! Why have I never heard until the day before yesterday of your suffering yourself to be cooped up in jail? and why did you let him do it, Perker?"

"I couldn't help it, my dear sir," replied Perker, with a smile and a pinch of snuff, "you know how obstinate he is."

"Of course I do, of course I do," replied the old gentleman. "I am heartily glad to see him, notwithstanding. I will not lose sight of him again, in a hurry."

With these words, Wardle shook Mr. Pickwick's hand once more, and, having done the same by Perker, threw himself into an arm-chair; his jolly red face shining again with smiles and health.

"Well," said Wardle, "here are pretty goings on — a pinch of your snuff, Perker, my boy — never were such times, eh?"

"What do you mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Mean!" replied Wardle, "why, I think the girls are all running mad; that's no news, you'll say? perhaps it's not; but it's true, for all that."

"You have not come up to London, of all places in the world, to tell us *that*, my dear sir, have you?" inquired Perker.

"No, not altogether," replied Wardle; "though it was the main cause of my coming. How's Arabella?"

"Very well," replied Mr. Pickwick, "and will be delighted to see you, I am sure."

"Black-eyed little jilt!" replied Wardle. "I had a great idea of marrying her myself, one of these odd days. But I am glad of it too, very glad."

"How did the intelligence reach you?" asked Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, it came to my girls, of course," replied Wardle. "Arabella wrote, the day before yesterday, to say she had made a stolen match without her husband's father's consent, and so you had gone down to get it when his

refusing it couldn't prevent the match, and all the rest of it. I thought it a very good time to say something serious to *my* girls; so I said what a dreadful thing it was that children should marry without their parents' consent, and so forth; but, bless your hearts, I couldn't make the least impression upon them. They thought it such a much more dreadful thing that there should have been a wedding without bridesmaids, that I might as well have preached to Joe himself."

Here the old gentleman stopped to laugh; and having done so, to his heart's content, presently resumed:

"But this is not the best of it, it seems. This is only half the love-making and plotting that have been going forward. We have been walking on mines for the last six months, and they're sprung at last."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, turning pale; "no other secret marriage, I hope?"

"No, no," replied old Wardle; "not so bad as that — no."

"What then?" inquired Mr. Pickwick; "am I interested in it?"

"Shall I answer that question, Perker?" said Wardle.

"If you don't commit yourself by doing so, my dear sir."

"Well then, you are," said Wardle.

"How?" asked Mr. Pickwick anxiously. "In what way?"

"Really," replied Wardle, "you're such a fiery sort of young fellow, that I am almost afraid to tell you; but, however, if Perker will sit between us to prevent mischief, I'll venture."

Having closed the room-door, and fortified himself with another application to Perker's snuff-box, the old gentleman proceeded with his great disclosure in these words:

"The fact is, that my daughter Bella — Bella, that married young Trundle, you know."

"Yes, yes, we know," said Mr. Pickwick impatiently.

"Don't alarm me at the very beginning. My daughter Bella: Emily having gone to bed with a headache, after she had read Arabella's letter to me: sat herself down by my side the other evening, and began to talk over this marriage affair. 'Well, pa,' she says, 'what do you think of it?' 'Why, my dear,' I said, 'I suppose it's all very well; I hope it's for the best.' I answered in this way because I was sitting before the fire at the time, drinking my grog rather thoughtfully, and I knew my throwing in an undecided word now and then, would induce her to continue talking. Both my girls are pictures of their dear mother, and as I grow old I like to sit with only them by me; for their voices and looks carry me back to the happiest period of my life, and make me, for the moment, as young as I used to be then, though not quite so light-hearted. 'It's quite a marriage of affection, pa,' said Bella, after a short silence. 'Yes, my dear,' said I, 'but such marriages do not always turn out the happiest.'"

"I question that, mind," interposed Mr. Pickwick, warmly.

"Very good," responded Wardle, "question anything you like when it's your turn to speak, but don't interrupt me."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Granted," replied Wardle. "'I am sorry to hear you express your opinion against marriages of affection, pa,' said Bella, coloring a little. 'I was wrong; I ought not to have said so, my dear, either,' said I, patting her cheek as kindly as a rough old fellow like me could pat

it, 'for your mother's was one, and so was yours.' 'It's not that, I meant, pa,' said Bella. 'The fact is, pa, I wanted to speak to you about Emily.'"

Mr. Pickwick started.

"What's the matter now?" inquired Wardle, stopping in his narrative.

"Nothing," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Pray go on."

"I never could spin out a story," said Wardle abruptly. "It must come out, sooner or later, and it 'll save us all a great deal of time if it comes at once. The long and the short of it is, then, that Bella at last mustered up courage to tell me that Emily was very unhappy; that she and your young friend Snodgrass had been in constant correspondence and communication ever since last Christmas; that she had very dutifully made up her mind to run away with him, in laudable imitation of her old friend and schoolfellow; but that having some compunctions of conscience on the subject, inasmuch as I had always been rather kindly disposed to both of them, they had thought it better in the first instance to pay me the compliment of asking whether I would have any objection to their being married in the usual matter-of-fact manner. There now, Mr. Pickwick, if you can make it convenient to reduce your eyes to their usual size again, and to let me hear what you think we ought to do, I shall feel rather obliged to you!"

The testy manner in which the hearty old gentleman uttered this last sentence was not wholly unwarranted; for Mr. Pickwick's face had settled down into an expression of blank amazement and perplexity, quite curious to behold.

"Snodgrass! — since last Christmas!" were the first broken words that issued from the lips of the confounded gentleman.

"Since last Christmas," replied Wardle; "that's plain enough, and very bad spectacles we must have worn not to have discovered it before."

"I don't understand it," said Mr. Pickwick, ruminating; "I really cannot understand it."

"It's easy enough to understand," replied the choleric old gentleman. "If you had been a younger man, you would have been in the secret long ago; and besides," added Wardle after a moment's hesitation, "the truth is, that, knowing nothing of this matter, I have rather pressed Emily, for four or five months past, to receive favorably (if she could; I would never attempt to force a girl's inclinations) the addresses of a young gentleman down in our neighborhood. I have no doubt that, girl-like, to enhance her own value and increase the ardor of Mr. Snodgrass, she has represented this matter in very glowing colors, and that they have both arrived at the conclusion that they are a terribly persecuted pair of unfortunates, and have no resource but clandestine matrimony or charcoal. Now the question is, what's to be done?"

"What have *you* done?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I!"

"I mean what did you do when your married daughter told you this?"

"Oh, I made a fool of myself of course," rejoined Wardle.

"Just so," interposed Perker, who had accompanied this dialogue with sundry twitchings of his watch-chain, vindictive rubbings of his nose, and other symptoms of impatience. "That's very natural; but how?"

"I went into a great passion and frightened my mother into a fit," said Wardle.

"That was judicious," remarked Perker; "and what else?"

"I fretted and fumed all next day, and raised a great disturbance," rejoined the old gentleman. "At last I got tired of rendering myself unpleasant and making everybody miserable; so I hired a carriage at Muggleton, and, putting my own horses in it, came up to town, under pretence of bringing Emily to see Arabella."

"Miss Wardle is with you, then?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"To be sure she is," replied Wardle. "She is at Osborne's hotel in the Adelphi at this moment, unless your enterprising friend has run away with her since I came out this morning."

"You are reconciled, then?" said Perker.

"Not a bit of it," answered Wardle; "she has been crying and moping ever since, except last night, between tea and supper, when she made a great parade of writing a letter, that I pretended to take no notice of."

"You want my advice in this matter, I suppose?" said Perker, looking from the musing face of Mr. Pickwick to the eager countenance of Wardle, and taking several consecutive pinches of his favorite stimulant.

"I suppose so," said Wardle, looking at Mr. Pickwick.

"Certainly," replied that gentleman.

"Well then," said Perker, rising and pushing his chair back, "my advice is, that you both walk away together, or ride away, or get away by some means or other, for I'm tired of you, and just talk this matter over between you. If you have not settled it by the next time I see you, I'll tell you what to do."

"This is satisfactory," said Wardle, hardly knowing whether to smile or be offended.

"Pooh, pooh, my dear sir," returned Perker, "I know you both a great deal better than you know yourselves. You have settled it already, to all intents and purposes."

Thus expressing himself, the little gentleman poked his snuff-box, first into the chest of Mr. Pickwick, and then into the waistcoat of Mr. Wardle, upon which they all three laughed, but especially the two last-named gentlemen, who at once shook hands again, without any obvious or particular reason.

"You dine with me to-day," said Wardle to Perker, as he showed them out.

"Can't promise, my dear sir, can't promise," replied Perker. "I'll look in, in the evening, at all events."

"I shall expect you at five," said Wardle. "Now, Joe!" And Joe having been at length awakened, the two friends departed in Mr. Wardle's carriage, which in common humanity had a dickey behind for the fat boy who, if there had been a foot-board instead, would have rolled off and killed himself, in his very first nap.

Driving to the George and Vulture, they found that Arabella and her maid had sent for a hackney-coach immediately on the receipt of a short note from Emily announcing her arrival in town, and had proceeded straight to the Adelphi. As Wardle had business to transact in the city, they sent the carriage and the fat boy to his hotel, with the information that he and Mr. Pickwick would return together to dinner at five o'clock.

Charged with this message, the fat boy returned, slumbering as peaceably in his dickey, over the stones, as if it had been a down-bed on watch-springs. By some ex-

traordinary miracle he awoke of his own accord, when the coach stopped, and giving himself a good shake to stir up his faculties, went up-stairs to execute his commission.

Now, whether the shake had jumbled the fat boy's faculties together, instead of arranging them in proper order, or had roused such a quantity of new ideas within him as to render him oblivious of ordinary forms and ceremonies, or (which is also possible) had proved unsuccessful in preventing his falling asleep as he ascended the stairs, it is an undoubted fact that he walked into the sitting-room without previously knocking at the door; and so beheld a gentleman with his arm clasping his young mistress's waist, sitting very lovingly by her side on a sofa, while Arabella and her pretty handmaid feigned to be absorbed in looking out of a window at the other end of the room. At sight of this phenomenon, the fat boy uttered an interjection, the ladies a scream, and the gentleman an oath, almost simultaneously.

"Wretched creature, what do you want here?" said the gentleman, who it is needless to say was Mr. Snodgrass.

To this the fat boy, considerably terrified, briefly responded, "Missis."

"What do you want me for?" inquired Emily, turning her head aside, "you stupid creature!"

"Master and Mr. Pickwick is a-going to dine here at five," replied the fat boy.

"Leave the room," said Mr. Snodgrass, glaring upon the bewildered youth.

"No, no, no," added Emily hastily. "Bella, dear, advise me."

Upon this, Emily and Mr. Snodgrass, and Arabella

and Mary, crowded into a corner, and conversed earnestly in whispers for some minutes, during which the fat boy dozed.

"Joe," said Arabella at length, looking round with a most bewitching smile, "how do you do, Joe?"

"Joe," said Emily, "you're a very good boy; I won't forget you, Joe."

"Joe," said Mr. Snodgrass, advancing to the astonished youth, and seizing his hand, "I didn't know you before. There's five shillings for you, Joe!"

"I'll owe you five, Joe," said Arabella, "for old acquaintance' sake, you know;" and another most captivating smile was bestowed upon the corpulent intruder.

The fat boy's perception being slow, he looked rather puzzled at first to account for this sudden prepossession in his favor, and stared about him in a very alarming manner. At length his broad face began to show symptoms of a grin of proportionately broad dimensions; and then, thrusting half-a-crown into each of his pockets, and a hand and wrist after it, he burst into a horse-laugh: being for the first and only time in his existence.

"He understands us, I see," said Arabella.

"He had better have something to eat, immediately," remarked Emily.

The fat boy almost laughed again when he heard this suggestion. Mary, after a little more whispering, tripped forth from the group, and said:

"I am going to dine with you to-day, sir, if you have no objection."

"This way," said the fat boy, eagerly. "There is such a jolly meat pie!"

With these words, the fat boy led the way down-stairs; his pretty companion captivating all the waiters and an-

gering all the chamber-maids as she followed him to the eating-room.

There was the meat-pie of which the youth had spoken so feelingly: and there were, moreover, a steak, and a dish of potatoes, and a pot of porter.

"Sit down," said the fat boy. "Oh, my eye, how prime! I am *so* hungry."

Having apostrophized his eye, in a species of rapture, five or six times, the youth took the head of the little table, and Mary sat herself at the bottom.

"Will you have some of this?" said the fat boy, plunging into the pie up to the very ferules of the knife and fork.

"A little, if you please," replied Mary.

The fat boy assisted Mary to a little, and himself to a great deal, and was just going to begin eating when he suddenly laid down his knife and fork, leant forward in his chair, and letting his hands, with the knife and fork in them, fall on his knees, said, very slowly:

"I say, how nice you look!"

This was said in an admiring manner, and was, so far, gratifying; but still there was enough of the cannibal in the young gentleman's eyes to render the compliment a doubtful one.

"Dear me, Joseph," said Mary, affecting to blush, "what do you mean?"

The fat boy, gradually recovering his former position, replied with a heavy sigh, and remaining thoughtful for a few moments, drank a long draught of the porter. Having achieved this feat he sighed again, and applied himself assiduously to the pie.

"What a nice young lady Miss Emily is!" said Mary, after a long silence.

The fat boy had by this time finished the pie. He fixed his eyes on Mary, and replied :

"I knows a nicerer."

"Indeed!" said Mary.

"Yes, indeed!" replied the fat boy, with unwonted vivacity.

"What's her name?" inquired Mary.

"What's yours?"

"Mary."

"So's hers," said the fat boy. "You're her." The boy grinned to add point to the compliment, and put his eyes into something between a squint and a cast, which there is reason to believe he intended for an ogle.

"You mustn't talk to me in that way," said Mary; "you don't mean it."

"Don't I though?" replied the fat boy; "I say" —

"Well."

"Are you going to come here regular?"

"No," rejoined Mary, shaking her head, "I'm going away again to-night. Why?"

"Oh!" said the fat boy, in a tone of strong feeling; "how we should have enjoyed ourselves at meals, if you had been!"

"I might come here sometimes perhaps, to see you," said Mary, plaiting the table-cloth in assumed coyness, "if you would do me a favor."

The fat boy looked from the pie-dish to the steak, as if he thought a favor must be in a manner connected with something to eat; and then took out one of the half-crowns and glanced at it nervously.

"Don't you understand me?" said Mary, looking slyly in his fat face.

Again he looked at the half-crown, and said faintly, "No."

"The ladies want you not to say anything to the old gentleman about the young gentleman having been up-stairs; and I want you too."

"Is that all!" said the fat boy, evidently very much relieved as he pocketed the half-crown again. "Of course I a'n't a-going to."

"You see," said Mary, "Mr. Snodgrass is very fond of Miss Emily, and Miss Emily's very fond of him, and if you were to tell about it, the old gentleman would carry you all away, miles into the country, where you'd see nobody."

"No, no, I won't tell," said the fat boy, stoutly.

"That's a dear," said Mary. "Now it's time I went up-stairs, and got my lady ready for dinner."

"Don't go yet," urged the fat boy.

"I must," replied Mary. "Good-by, for the present."

The fat boy, with elephantine playfulness, stretched out his arms to ravish a kiss; but as it required no great agility to elude him, his fair enslaver had vanished before he closed them again; upon which the apathetic youth ate a pound or so of steak with a sentimental countenance, and fell fast asleep.

There was so much to say up-stairs, and there were so many plans to concert for elopement and matrimony in the event of old Wardle continuing to be cruel, that it wanted only half an hour of dinner when Mr. Snodgrass took his final adieu. The ladies ran to Emily's bedroom to dress, and the lover, taking up his hat, walked out of the room. He had scarcely got outside the door, when he heard Wardle's voice talking loudly;

and looking over the banisters, beheld him, followed by some other gentlemen, coming straight up-stairs. Knowing nothing of the house, Mr. Snodgrass, in his confusion, stepped hastily back into the room he had just quitted, and passing from thence into an inner apartment (Mr. Wardle's bedchamber), closed the door softly, just as the persons he had caught a glimpse of, entered the sitting-room. These were Mr. Wardle, and Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, and Mr. Benjamin Allen, whom he had no difficulty in recognizing by their voices.

"Very lucky I had the presence of mind to avoid them," thought Mr. Snodgrass with a smile, and walking on tiptoe to another door near the bedside, "this opens into the same passage, and I can walk, quietly and comfortably, away."

There was only one obstacle to his walking quietly and comfortably away, which was, that the door was locked and the key gone.

"Let us have some of your best wine to-day, waiter," said old Wardle, rubbing his hands.

"You shall have some of the very best, sir," replied the waiter.

"Let the ladies know we have come in."

"Yes, sir."

Devoutly and ardently did Mr. Snodgrass wish that the ladies could know *he* had come in. He ventured once to whisper "Waiter!" through the keyhole, but as the probability of the wrong waiter coming to his relief, flashed upon his mind, together with a sense of the strong resemblance between his own situation and that in which another gentleman had been recently found in a neighboring hotel (an account of whose misfortunes had appeared under the head of "Police" in that morn-

ing's paper), he sat himself on a portmanteau, and trembled violently.

"We won't wait a minute for Perker," said Wardle, looking at his watch; "he is always exact. He will be here, in time, if he means to come; and if he does not, it's of no use waiting. Ha! Arabella."

"My sister!" exclaimed Mr. Benjamin Allen, folding her in a most romantic embrace.

"Oh, Ben, dear, how you do smell of tobacco," said Arabella, rather overcome by this mark of affection.

"Do I?" said Mr. Benjamin Allen, "do I, Bella? Well, perhaps I do."

Perhaps he did; having just left a pleasant little smoking party of twelve medical students, in a small back parlor with a large fire.

"But I am delighted to see you," said Mr. Ben Allen. "Bless you, Bella."

"There," said Arabella, bending forward to kiss her brother; "don't take hold of me again, Ben dear, because you tumble me so."

At this point of the reconciliation, Mr. Ben Allen allowed his feelings and the cigars and porter to overcome him, and looked round upon the beholders with damp spectacles.

"Is nothing to be said to me?" cried Wardle with open arms.

"A great deal," whispered Arabella, as she received the old gentleman's hearty caress and congratulation. "You are a hard-hearted, unfeeling, cruel, monster!"

"You are a little rebel," replied Wardle, in the same tone; "and I am afraid I shall be obliged to forbid you the house. People like you, who get married in spite of everybody, ought not to be let loose on society. But

come!" added the old gentleman aloud, "Here's the dinner; you shall sit by me. Joe; why, damn the boy, he's awake!"

To the great distress of his master, the fat boy was indeed in a state of remarkable vigilance; his eyes being wide open, and looking as if they intended to remain so. There was an alacrity in his manner, too, which was equally unaccountable; every time his eyes met those of Emily or Arabella, he smirked and grinned; and once Wardle could have sworn he saw him wink.

This alteration in the fat boy's demeanor, originated in his increased sense of his own importance, and the dignity he acquired from having been taken into the confidence of the young ladies; and the smirks and grins, and winks, were so many condescending assurances that they might depend upon his fidelity. As these tokens were rather calculated to awaken suspicion than allay it, and were somewhat embarrassing besides, they were occasionally answered by a frown or shake of the head from Arabella, which the fat boy considering as hints to be on his guard, expressed his perfect understanding of, by smirking, grinning, and winking, with redoubled assiduity.

"Joe," said Mr. Wardle, after an unsuccessful search in all his pockets, "is my snuff-box on the sofa?"

"No, sir," replied the fat boy.

"Oh, I recollect; I left it on my dressing-table this morning," said Wardle. "Run into the next room and fetch it."

The fat boy went into the next room; and having been absent about a minute, returned with the snuff-box, and the palest face that ever a fat boy wore.

"What's the matter with the boy!" exclaimed Wardle.

"Nothen's the matter with me," replied Joe, nervously.

"Have you been seeing any spirits?" inquired the old gentleman.

"Or taking any?" added Ben Allen.

"I think you're right," whispered Wardle across the table. "He is intoxicated, I'm sure."

Ben Allen replied that he thought he was; and as that gentleman had seen a vast deal of the disease in question, Wardle was confirmed in an impression which had been hovering about his mind for half an hour, and at once arrived at the conclusion that the fat boy was drunk.

"Just keep your eye upon him for a few minutes," murmured Wardle. "We shall soon find out whether he is or not."

The unfortunate youth had only interchanged a dozen words with Mr. Snodgrass: that gentleman having implored him to make a private appeal to some friend to release him, and then pushed him out with the snuff-box, lest his prolonged absence should lead to a discovery. He ruminated a little with a most disturbed expression of face, and left the room in search of Mary.

But Mary had gone home, after dressing her mistress, and the fat boy came back again, more disturbed than before.

Wardle and Mr. Ben Allen exchanged glances.

"Joe!" said Wardle.

"Yes, sir."

"What did you go away for?"

The fat boy looked hopelessly in the face of everybody at table, and stammered out, that he didn't know.

"Oh," said Wardle, "you don't know, eh? Take this cheese to Mr. Pickwick."

Now, Mr. Pickwick being in the very best health and spirits, had been making himself perfectly delightful all dinner-time, and was at this moment engaged in an energetic conversation with Emily and Mr. Winkle: bowing his head, courteously, in the emphasis of his discourse, gently waving his left hand to lend force to his observations, and all glowing with placid smiles. He took a piece of cheese from the plate, and was on the point of turning round to renew the conversation, when the fat boy, stooping so as to bring his head on a level with that of Mr. Pickwick, pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and made the most horrible and hideous face that was ever seen out of a Christmas pantomime.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Pickwick, starting, "what a very — eh?" He stopped, for the fat boy had drawn himself up, and was, or pretended to be, fast asleep.

"What's the matter?" inquired Wardle.

"This is such an extremely singular lad!" replied Mr. Pickwick, looking uneasily at the boy. "It seems an odd thing to say, but, upon my word, I am afraid that, at times, he is a little deranged."

"Oh! Mr. Pickwick, pray don't say so," cried Emily and Arabella, both at once.

"I am not certain, of course," said Mr. Pickwick, amidst profound silence, and looks of general dismay; "but his manner to me this moment was really very alarming. Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, suddenly jumping up with a short scream. "I beg your pardon, ladies, but at that moment he ran some sharp instrument into my leg. Really he is not safe."

"He's drunk," roared old Wardle, passionately. "Ring the bell! Call the waiters! He's drunk."

"I a'n't," said the fat boy, falling on his knees as his master seized him by the collar. "I a'n't drunk."

"Then you're mad — that's worse. Call the waiters," said the old gentleman.

"I a'n't mad; I'm sensible," rejoined the fat boy, beginning to cry.

"Then, what the devil do you run sharp instruments into Mr. Pickwick's legs for?" inquired Wardle angrily.

"He wouldn't look at me," replied the boy. "I wanted to speak to him."

"What did you want to say?" asked half a dozen voices at once.

The fat boy gasped, looked at the bedroom door, gasped again, and wiped two tears away, with the knuckle of each of his forefingers.

"What did you want to say?" demanded Wardle, shaking him.

"Stop!" said Mr. Pickwick; "allow me. What did you wish to communicate to me, my poor boy?"

"I want to whisper to you," replied the fat boy.

"You want to bite his ear off, I suppose," said Wardle. "Don't come near him; he's vicious; ring the bell, and let him be taken down-stairs."

Just as Mr. Winkle caught the bell-rope in his hand, it was arrested by a general expression of astonishment; the captive lover, his face burning with confusion, suddenly walked in from the bedroom, and made a comprehensive bow to the company.

"Hallo!" cried Wardle, releasing the fat boy's collar, and staggering back, "What's this!"

"I have been concealed in the next room, sir, since you returned," explained Mr. Snodgrass.

"Emily, my girl," said Wardle, reproachfully, "I detest meanness and deceit; this is unjustifiable and indelicate in the highest degree. I don't deserve this, at your hands, Emily, indeed."

"Dear papa," said Emily, "Arabella knows — everybody here knows; Joe knows — that I was no party to this concealment. Augustus, for Heaven's sake, explain it!"

Mr. Snodgrass, who had only waited for a hearing, at once recounted how he had been placed in his then distressing predicament; how the fear of giving rise to domestic dissensions had alone prompted him to avoid Mr. Wardle on his entrance; and how he merely meant to depart by another door, but, finding it locked, had been compelled to stay against his will. It was a painful situation to be placed in; but he now regretted it the less, inasmuch as it afforded him an opportunity of acknowledging, before their mutual friends, that he loved Mr. Wardle's daughter, deeply and sincerely; that he was proud to avow that the feeling was mutual, and that if thousands of miles were placed between them, or oceans rolled their waters, he could never for an instant forget these happy days, when first — and so on.

Having delivered himself to this effect, Mr. Snodgrass bowed again, looked into the crown of his hat, and stepped towards the door.

"Stop!" shouted Wardle. "Why, in the name of all that's" ———

"Inflammable," mildly suggested Mr. Pickwick, who thought something worse was coming.

"Well — that's inflammable," said Wardle, adopting

the substitute; "couldn't you say all this to me in the first instance?"

"Or confide in me?" added Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear, dear," said Arabella, taking up the defence, "what is the use of asking all that now, especially when you know you had set your covetous old heart on a richer son-in-law, and are so wild and fierce besides, that everybody is afraid of you, except me. Shake hands with him, and order him some dinner, for goodness gracious sake, for he looks half-starved; and pray have your wine up at once, for you'll not be tolerable until you have taken two bottles at least."

The worthy old gentleman pulled Arabella's ear, kissed her without the smallest scruple, kissed his daughter also with great affection, and shook Mr. Snodgrass warmly by the hand.

"She is right on one point at all events," said the old gentleman, cheerfully. "Ring for the wine!"

The wine came, and Perker came up-stairs at the same moment. Mr. Snodgrass had dinner at a side table, and when he had despatched it, drew his chair next Emily, without the smallest opposition on the old gentleman's part.

The evening was excellent. Little Mr. Perker came out wonderfully, told various comic stories, and sang a serious song, which was almost as funny as the anecdotes. Arabella was very charming, Mr. Wardle very jovial, Mr. Pickwick very harmonious, Mr. Ben Allen very uproarious, the lovers very silent, Mr. Winkle very talkative, and all of them very happy.

CHAPTER LV.

MR. SOLOMON PELL, ASSISTED BY A SELECT COMMITTEE OF COACHMEN, ARRANGES THE AFFAIRS OF THE ELDER MR. WELLER.

"SAMIVEL," said Mr. Weller, accosting his son on the morning after the funeral, "I've found it, Sammy. I thought it wos there."

"Thought wot wos were?" inquired Sam.

"Your mother-in-law's vill, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "In wirtue o' vich, them arrangements is to be made as I told you on, last night, respectin' the funs."

"Wot, didn't she tell you were it wos?" inquired Sam.

"Not a bit on it, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "We wos a-adjestin' our little differences, and I wos a-cheerin' her spirits and bearin' her up, so that I forgot to ask anythin' about it. I don't know as I should ha' done it indeed, if I had remembered it," added Mr. Weller, "for it's a rum sort o' thing, Sammy, to go a hankerin' arter anybody's property, ven you're assistin' 'em in illness. It's like helpin' an outside passenger up, ven he's been pitched off a coach, and puttin' your hand in his pocket, vile you ask him vith a sigh how he finds his-self, Sammy."

With this figurative illustration of his meaning, Mr.

Weller unclasped his pocket-book, and drew forth a dirty sheet of letter-paper, on which were inscribed various characters crowded together in remarkable confusion.

"This here is the dockyment, Sammy," said Mr. Weller. "I found it in the little black tea-pot, on the top shelf o' the bar-closet. She used to keep bank-notes there, 'afore she vos married, Samivel. I've seen her take the lid off, to pay a bill, many and many a time. Poor creeter, she might ha' filled all the tea-pots in the house vith vills, and not have inconwenienced herself neither, for she took wery little of anythin' in that vay lately, 'cept on the Temperance nights, ven they just laid a foundation o' tea to put the spirits a-top on!"

"What does it say?" inquired Sam.

"Jist vot I told you, my boy," rejoined his parent. "Two hundred pounds vurth o' reduced counsels to my son-in-law, Samivel, and all the rest o' my property, of ev'ry kind and description votsoever, to my husband, Mr. Tony Veller, who I appint as my sole eggzekiter."

"That's all, is it?" said Sam.

"That's all," replied Mr. Weller. "And I s'pose as it's all right and satisfactory to you and me, as is the only parties interested, ve may as vell put this bit o' paper into the fire."

"Wot are you a-doin' on, you lunatic?" said Sam, snatching the paper away, as his parent, in all innocence, stirred the fire preparatory to suiting the action to the word. "You're a nice eggzekiter, you are."

"Vy not?" inquired Mr. Weller, looking sternly round, with the poker in his hand.

"Vy not!" exclaimed Sam, — "'cos it must be proved, and probated, and swore to, and all manner o' formalities."

"You don't mean that?" said Mr. Weller, laying down the poker.

Sam buttoned the will carefully in a side-pocket; intimating by a look, meanwhile, that he did mean it, and very seriously too.

"Then I'll tell you what it is," said Mr. Weller, after a short meditation, "this is a case for that 'ere confidential pal o' the Chancellorship's. Pell must look into this, Sammy. He's the man for a difficult question at law. Ve'll have this here, brought afore the Solvent court directly, Samivel."

"I never did see such a addle-headed old creetur!" exclaimed Sam, irritably. "Old Baileys, and Solvent Courts, and alleybis, and ev'ry species o' gammon alvays a-runnin' through his brain! You'd better get your out o' door clothes on, and come to town about this bisness, than stand a-preachin' there, about wot you don't understand nothin' on."

"Wery good, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller. "I'm quite agreeable to anythin' as vill hexpedite business, Sammy. But mind this here, my boy, nobody but Pell — nobody but Pell as a legal adwiser."

"I don't want anybody else," replied Sam. "Now, are you a-comin'?"

"Vait a minit, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, who having tied his shawl with the aid of a small glass that hung in the window, was now, by dint of the most wonderful exertions, struggling into his upper garments. "Vait a minit, Sammy; ven you grow as old as your father, you von't get into your veskit quite as easy as you do now, my boy."

"If I couldn't get into it easier than that, I'm blessed if I'd vear vun at all," rejoined his son.

"You think so now," said Mr. Weller, with the gravity of age, "but you'll find that as you get vider, you'll get viser. Vidth and visdom, Sammy, alvays grows together."

As Mr. Weller delivered this infallible maxim — the result of many years' personal experience and observation — he contrived, by a dexterous twist of his body, to get the bottom button of his coat to perform its office. Having paused a few seconds to recover breath, he brushed his hat with his elbow, and declared himself ready.

"As four heads is better than two, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, as they drove along the London road in the chaise-cart, "and as all this here property is a wery great temptation to a legal gen'l'm'n, ve'll take a couple o' friends o' mine vith us, as'll be wery soon down upon him if he comes anythin' irreg'lar; two o' them as saw you to the Fleet that day. They're the wery best judges," added Mr. Weller in a half whisper, "the wery best judges of a horse you ever know'd."

"And of a lawyer too?" inquired Sam.

"The man as can form a ackerate judgment of a animal, can form a ackerate judgment of anythin'," replied his father; so dogmatically, that Sam did not attempt to controvert the position.

In pursuance of this notable resolution, the services of the mottled-face gentleman and of two other very fat coachmen — selected by Mr. Weller, probably, with a view to their width and consequent wisdom — were put into requisition; and this assistance having been secured, the party proceeded to the public-house in Portugal Street, whence a messenger was despatched to the Insolvent Court over the way, requiring Mr. Solomon Pell's immediate attendance.

The messenger fortunately found Mr. Solomon Pell in court, regaling himself, business being rather slack, with a cold collation of an Abernethy biscuit and a saveloy. The message was no sooner whispered in his ear than he thrust them in his pocket among various professional documents, and hurried over the way with such alacrity, that he reached the parlor before the messenger had even emancipated himself from the court.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Pell, touching his hat, "my service to you all. I don't say it to flatter you, gentlemen, but there are not five other men in the world, that I'd have come out of that court for, to-day."

"So busy, eh?" said Sam.

"Busy!" replied Pell; "I'm completely sewn up, as my friend the late Lord Chancellor many a time used to say to me, gentlemen, when he came out from hearing appeals in the House of Lords. Poor fellow! he was very susceptible of fatigue; he used to feel those appeals uncommonly. I actually thought more than once that he'd have sunk under 'em; I did indeed."

Here Mr. Pell shook his head, and paused; on which, the elder Mr. Weller, nudging his neighbor, as begging him to mark the attorney's high connections, asked whether the duties in question produced any permanent ill effects on the constitution of his noble friend.

"I don't think he ever quite recovered them," replied Pell; "in fact, I'm sure he never did. 'Pell,' he used to say to me many a time, 'how the blazes you can stand the head-work you do, is a mystery to me.' — 'Well,' I used to answer, '*I* hardly know how I do it, upon my life.' — 'Pell,' he'd add, sighing, and looking at me with a little envy — friendly envy, you know, gentlemen, mere friendly envy; I never minded it — 'Pell, you're a won-

der; a wonder.' Ah! you'd have liked him very much if you had known him, gentlemen. Bring me three penn'orth of rum, my dear."

Addressing this latter remark to the waitress in a tone of subdued grief, Mr. Pell sighed, looked at his shoes, and the ceiling; and, the rum having by that time arrived, drunk it up.

"However," said Pell, drawing a chair to the table, "a professional man has no right to think of his private friendships when his legal assistance is wanted. By the by, gentlemen, since I saw you here before, we have had to weep over a very melancholy occurrence."

Mr. Pell drew out a pocket-handkerchief when he came to the word weep, but he made no further use of it than to wipe away a slight tinge of rum which hung upon his upper lip.

"I saw it in the Advertiser, Mr. Weller," continued Pell. "Bless my soul, not more than fifty-two! dear me — only think."

These indications of a musing spirit were addressed to the mottled-faced man, whose eyes Mr. Pell had accidentally caught; on which, the mottled-faced man, whose apprehension of matters in general was of a foggy nature, moved uneasily in his seat, and opined that indeed, so far as that went, there was no saying how things *was* brought about; which observation, involving one of those subtle propositions which it is difficult to encounter in argument, was controverted by nobody.

"I have heard it remarked that she was a very fine woman, Mr. Weller," said Pell in a sympathizing manner.

"Yes, sir, she wos," replied the elder Mr. Weller, not much relishing this mode of discussing the subject, and

yet thinking that the attorney, from his long intimacy with the late Lord Chancellor, must know best on all matters of polite breeding. "She wos a wery fine 'ooman, sir, ven I first know'd her. She wos a widder, sir, at that time."

"Now, it's curious," said Pell, looking round with a sorrowful smile; "Mrs. Pell was a widow."

"That's very extraordinary," said the mottled-faced man.

"Well, it is a curious coincidence," said Pell.

"Not at all," gruffly remarked the elder Mr. Weller. "More widders is married than single wimin."

"Very good, very good," said Pell, "you're quite right, Mr. Weller. Mrs. Pell was a very elegant and accomplished woman; her manners were the theme of universal admiration in our neighborhood. I was proud to see that woman dance; there was something so firm and dignified, and yet natural, in her motion. Her cutting, gentlemen, was simplicity itself — Ah! well, well! Excuse my asking the question, Mr. Samuel," continued the attorney in a lower voice, "was your mother-in-law tall?"

"Not wery," replied Sam.

"Mrs. Pell was a tall figure," said Pell, "a splendid woman, with a noble shape, and a nose, gentlemen, formed to command and be majestic. She was very much attached to me — very much — highly connected, too; her mother's brother, gentlemen, failed for eight hundred pound, as a Law Stationer."

"Vell," said Mr. Weller, who had grown rather restless during this discussion, "vith regard to bis'ness."

The word was music to Pell's ears. He had been revolving in his mind whether any business was to be

transacted, or whether he had been merely invited to partake of a glass of brandy and water, or a bowl of punch, or any similar professional compliment, and now the doubt was set at rest without his appearing at all eager for its solution. His eyes glistened as he laid his hat on the table, and said:

"What is the business upon which — um? Either of these gentlemen wish to go through the court? We require an arrest, a friendly arrest will do, you know; we are all friends here, I suppose?"

"Give me the dockyment, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, taking the will from his son, who appeared to enjoy the interview amazingly. "Wot we rekvire, sir, is a probe o' this here."

"Probate, my dear sir, probate," said Pell.

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Weller, sharply, "probe and probe it, is wery much the same; if you don't understand wot I mean, sir, I dessay I can find them as does."

"No offence I hope, Mr. Weller," said Pell, meekly. "You are the executor I see," he added, casting his eyes over the paper.

"I am, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"These other gentlemen, I presume, are legatees, are they?" inquired Pell, with a congratulatory smile.

"Sammy is a leg-at-ease," replied Mr. Weller; "these other gen'l'm'n is friends o' mine, just come to see fair; — a kind of umpires."

"Oh!" said Pell, "very good. I have no objections, I'm sure. I shall want a matter of five pound of you before I begin, ha! ha! ha!"

It being decided by the committee that the five pounds might be advanced, Mr. Weller produced that sum; after which, a long consultation about nothing particular took

place, in the course whereof Mr. Pell demonstrated, to the perfect satisfaction of the gentlemen who saw fair, that unless the management of the business had been intrusted to him, it must all have gone wrong, for reasons not clearly made out, but no doubt sufficient. This important point being despatched, Mr. Pell refreshed himself with three chops, and liquids both malt and spirituous, at the expense of the estate; and then they all went away to Doctors' Commons.

The next day, there was another visit to Doctors' Commons, and a great to-do with an attesting hostler, who, being inebriated, declined swearing anything but profane oaths, to the great scandal of a proctor and surrogate. Next week, there were more visits to Doctors' Commons, and there was a visit to the Legacy Duty Office besides, and there were treaties entered into, for the disposal of the lease and business, and ratifications of the same, and inventories to be made out, and lunches to be taken, and dinners to be eaten, and so many profitable things to be done, and such a mass of papers accumulated, that Mr. Solomon Pell, and the boy, and the blue bag to boot, all got so stout that scarcely anybody would have known them for the same man, boy, and bag, that had loitered about Portugal Street a few days before.

At length all these weighty matters being arranged, a day was fixed for selling out and transferring the stock, and of waiting, with that view, upon Wilkins Flasher, Esq., stockbroker, of somewhere near the Bank, who had been recommended by Mr. Solomon Pell for the purpose.

It was a kind of festive occasion, and the parties were attired accordingly. Mr. Weller's tops were newly

cleaned, and his dress was arranged with peculiar care: the mottled-faced gentleman wore at his button-hole a full sized dahlia with several leaves; and the coats of his two friends were adorned with nosegays of laurel and other evergreens. All three were habited in strict holiday costume; that is to say, they were wrapped up to the chins, and wore as many clothes as possible, which is, and has been, a stage-coachman's idea of full dress, ever since stage-coaches were invented.

Mr. Pell was waiting at the usual place of meeting at the appointed time; and even Mr. Pell wore a pair of gloves and a clean shirt: the latter much frayed at the collar and wristbands by frequent washings.

"A quarter to two," said Pell, looking at the parlor clock. "If we are with Mr. Flasher at a quarter past, we shall just hit the best time."

"What should you say to a drop o' beer, gen'l'm'n?" suggested the mottled-faced man.

"And a little bit o' cold beef," said the second coachman.

"Or a oyster," added the third, who was a hoarse gentleman, supported by very round legs.

"Hear, hear!" said Pell; "to congratulate Mr. Weller, on his coming into possession of his property: eh? ha! ha!"

"I'm quite agreeable, gen'l'm'n," answered Mr. Weller. "Sammy, pull the bell."

Sam complied; and the porter, cold beef, and oysters being promptly produced, the lunch was done ample justice to. Where everybody took so active a part, it is almost invidious to make a distinction; but if one individual evinced greater powers than another, it was the coachman with the hoarse voice, who took an imperial

pint of vinegar with his oysters, without betraying the least emotion.

"Mr. Pell, sir," said the elder Mr. Weller, stirring a glass of brandy and water, of which one was placed before every gentleman when the oyster shells were removed; "Mr. Pell, sir, it wos my intention to have proposed the funs on this occasion, but Samivel has vispered to me"—

Here Mr. Samuel Weller, who had silently eaten his oysters with tranquil smiles, cried "Hear!" in a very loud voice.

"— Has vispered to me," resumed his father, "that it vould be better to de-wote the liquor to vishin' you success and prosperity, and thankin' you for the manner in which you've brought this here business through. Here's your health, sir."

"Hold hard there," interposed the mottled-faced gentleman, with sudden energy, "your eyes on me, gen-'l'm'n!"

Saying this, the mottled-faced gentleman rose, as did the other gentlemen. The mottled-faced gentleman reviewed the company, and slowly lifted his hand, upon which every man (including he of the mottled countenance) drew a long breath, and lifted his tumbler to his lips. In one instant, the mottled-faced gentleman depressed his hand again, and every glass was set down empty. It is impossible to describe the thrilling effect produced by this striking ceremony; at once dignified, solemn, and impressive, it combined every element of grandeur.

"Well, gentlemen," said Mr. Pell, "all I can say is, that such marks of confidence must be very gratifying to a professional man. I don't wish to say anything that

might appear egotistical, gentlemen, but I'm very glad, for your own sakes, that you came to me: that's all. If you had gone to any low member of the profession, it's my firm conviction, and I assure you of it as a fact, that you would have found yourselves in Queer Street before this. I could have wished my noble friend had been alive to have seen my management of this case; I don't say it out of pride, but I think — however, gentlemen, I won't trouble you with that. I'm generally to be found here, gentlemen, but if I'm not here, or over the way, that's my address. You'll find my terms very cheap and reasonable, and no man attends more to his clients than I do, and I hope I know a little of my profession besides. If you have any opportunity of recommending me to any of your friends, gentlemen, I shall be very much obliged to you, and so will they too, when they come to know me. *Your* healths, gentlemen."

With this expression of his feelings, Mr. Solomon Pell laid three small written cards before Mr. Weller's friends, and, looking at the clock again, feared it was time to be walking. Upon this hint Mr. Weller settled the bill, and, issuing forth, the executor, legatee, attorney, and umpires, directed their steps towards the city.

The office of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, of the Stock Exchange, was in a first floor up a court behind the Bank of England; the house of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, was at Brixton, Surrey; the horse and stanhope of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, were at an adjacent livery stable; the groom of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, was on his way to the West End to deliver some game; the clerk of Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, had gone to his dinner; and so Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, himself, cried, "Come in," when Mr. Pell and his companions knocked at the counting-house door.

"Good-morning, sir," said Pell, bowing obsequiously. "We want to make a little transfer, if you please."

"Oh, come in, will you?" said Mr. Flasher. "Sit down a minute; I'll attend to you directly."

"Thank you, sir," said Pell, "there's no hurry. Take a chair, Mr. Weller."

Mr. Weller took a chair, and Sam took a box, and the umpires took what they could get, and looked at the almanac and one or two papers which were wafered against the wall, with as much open-eyed reverence as if they had been the finest efforts of the old masters.

"Well, I'll bet you half a dozen of claret on it; come!" said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, resuming the conversation to which Mr. Pell's entrance had caused a momentary interruption.

This was addressed to a very smart young gentleman who wore his hat on his right whisker, and was lounging over the desk, killing flies with a ruler. Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, was balancing himself on two legs of an office stool, spearing a wafer-box with a penknife, which he dropped every now and then, with great dexterity, into the very centre of a small red wafer that was stuck outside. Both gentlemen had very open waistcoats and very rolling collars, and very small boots, and very big rings, and very little watches, and very large guard chains, and symmetrical inexpressibles and scented pocket-handkerchiefs.

"I never bet half a dozen," said the other gentleman.

"I'll take a dozen."

"Done, Simmery, done!" said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire.

"P. P., mind," observed the other.

"Of course," replied Wilkins Flasher, Esquire; and

Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, entered it in a little book, with a gold pencil-case, and the other gentleman entered it also, in another little book, with another gold pencil-case.

"I see there's a notice up this morning about Boffer," observed Mr. Simmery. "Poor devil, he's expelled the house!"

"I'll bet you ten guineas to five, he cuts his throat," said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire.

"Done," replied Mr. Simmery.

"Stop! I bar," said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, thoughtfully. "Perhaps he may hang himself."

"Very good," rejoined Mr. Simmery, pulling out the gold pencil-case again. "I've no objection to take you that way. Say — makes away with himself."

"Kills himself, in fact," said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire.

"Just so," replied Mr. Simmery, putting it down. "'Flasher — ten guineas to five, Boffer kills himself.' Within what time shall we say?"

"A fortnight?" suggested Wilkins Flasher, Esquire.

"Con-found it, no;" rejoined Mr. Simmery, stopping for an instant to smash a fly with the ruler. "Say a week."

"Split the difference," said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire. "Make it ten days."

"Well; ten days," rejoined Mr. Simmery.

So, it was entered down in the little books that Boffer was to kill himself within ten days, or Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, was to hand over to Frank Simmery, Esquire, the sum of ten guineas; and that if Boffer did kill himself within that time, Frank Simmery, Esquire, would pay to Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, five guineas, instead.

"I'm very sorry he has failed," said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire. "Capital dinners he gave."

"Fine port he had too," remarked Mr. Simmery. "We are going to send our butler to the sale to-morrow, to pick up some of that sixty-four."

"The devil you are!" said Wilkins Flasher, Esquire. "My man's going too. Five guineas my man outbids your man."

"Done."

Another entry was made in the little books, with the gold pencil-cases; and Mr. Simmery having, by this time, killed all the flies and taken all the bets, strolled away to the Stock Exchange to see what was going forward.

Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, now condescended to receive Mr. Solomon Pell's instructions, and having filled up some printed forms, requested the party to follow him to the Bank: which they did: Mr. Weller and his three friends staring at all they beheld in unbounded astonishment, and Sam encountering everything with a coolness which nothing could disturb.

Crossing a court-yard which was all noise and bustle; and passing a couple of porters who seemed dressed to match the red fire-engine which was wheeled away into a corner; they passed into an office where their business was to be transacted, and where Pell and Mr. Flasher left them standing for a few moments, while they went up-stairs into the Will Office.

"Wot place is this here?" whispered the mottled-faced gentleman to the elder Mr. Weller.

"Counsel's Office," replied the executor in a whisper.

"Wot are them gen'l'm'n a-settin' behind the counters?" asked the hoarse coachman.

"Reduced counsels, I s'pose," replied Mr. Weller. "A'n't they the reduced counsels, Samivel?"

"Wy, you don't suppose the reduced counsels is alive, do you?" inquired Sam, with some disdain.

"How should I know?" retorted Mr. Weller; "I thought they looked wery like it. Wot are they, then?"

"Clerks," replied Sam.

"Wot are they all a-eatin' ham sangwidges for?" inquired his father.

"Cos it's in their dooty, I suppose," replied Sam, "it's a part o' the system; they're alvays a-doin' it here, all day long!"

Mr. Weller and his friends had scarcely had a moment to reflect upon this singular regulation as connected with the monetary system of the country, when they were rejoined by Pell and Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, who led them to a part of the counter above which was a round black board with a large "W" on it.

"Wot's that for, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller, directing Pell's attention to the target in question.

"The first letter of the name of the deceased," replied Pell.

"I say," said Mr. Weller, turning round to the umpires. "There's somethin' wrong here. We's our letter — this won't do."

The referees at once gave it as their decided opinion that the business could not be legally proceeded with, under the letter W, and in all probability it would have stood over for one day at least, had it not been for the prompt, though, at first sight, undutiful behavior of Sam, who, seizing his father by the skirt of the coat, dragged him to the counter, and pinned him there, until he had affixed his signature to a couple of instruments; which from Mr. Weller's habit of printing, was a work of so

much labor and time, that the officiating clerk peeled and ate three Ripstone pippins while it was performing.

As the elder Mr. Weller insisted on selling out his portion forthwith, they proceeded from the Bank to the gate of the Stock Exchange, to which Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, after a short absence, returned with a check on Smith, Payne, and Smith, for five hundred and thirty pounds; that being the sum of money to which Mr. Weller at the market price of the day, was entitled, in consideration of the balance of the second Mrs. Weller's funded savings. Sam's two hundred pounds stood transferred to his name, and Wilkins Flasher, Esquire, having been paid his commission, dropped the money carelessly into his coat-pocket, and lounged back to his office.

Mr. Weller was at first obstinately determined on cashing the check in nothing but sovereigns; but it being represented by the umpires that by so doing he must incur the expense of a small sack to carry them home in, he consented to receive the amount in five-pound notes.

"My son," said Mr. Weller as they came out of the banking-house, "my son and me has a wery particular engagement this arternoon, and I should like to have this here bis'ness settled out of hand, so let's jest go straight avay someveres, vere ve can hordit the accounts."

A quiet room was soon found, and the accounts were produced and audited. Mr. Pell's bill was taxed by Sam, and some charges were disallowed by the umpires: but, notwithstanding Mr. Pell's declaration, accompanied with many solemn asseverations that they were really too hard upon him, it was, by very many degrees, the best professional job he had ever had, and one on which he boarded, lodged, and washed, for six months afterwards.

The umpires having partaken of a dram, shook hands and departed, as they had to drive out of town that night. Mr. Solomon Pell, finding that nothing more was going forward, either in the eating or drinking way, took a friendly leave, and Sam and his father were left alone.

"There," said Mr. Weller, thrusting his pocket-book in his side-pocket, "vith the bills for the lease, and that, there's eleven hundred and eighty pound here. Now Samivel, my boy, turn the horses' heads to the George and Wulter!"

CHAPTER LVI.

AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE TAKES PLACE BETWEEN MR. PICKWICK AND SAMUEL WELLER, AT WHICH HIS PARENT ASSISTS. — AN OLD GENTLEMAN IN A SNUFF-COLORED SUIT ARRIVES UNEXPECTEDLY.

Mr. Pickwick was sitting alone, musing over many things, and thinking, among other considerations, how he could best provide for the young couple whose present unsettled condition was matter of constant regret and anxiety to him, when Mary stepped lightly into the room, and, advancing to the table, said, rather hastily :

"Oh, if you please sir, Samuel is down-stairs, and he says may his father see you ?"

"Surely," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Thank you, sir," said Mary, tripping towards the door again.

"Sam has not been here long, has he ?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, no, sir," replied Mary eagerly. "He has only just come home. He is not going to ask you for any more leave, sir, he says."

Mary might have been conscious that she had communicated this last intelligence with more warmth than seemed actually necessary, or she might have observed

the good-humored smile with which Mr. Pickwick regarded her, when she had finished speaking. She certainly held down her head, and examined the corner of a very smart little apron, with more closeness than there appeared any absolute occasion for.

"Tell them they can come up at once, by all means," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mary, apparently much relieved, hurried away with her message.

Mr. Pickwick took two or three turns up and down the room; and, rubbing his chin with his left hand as he did so, appeared lost in thought.

"Well, well," said Mr. Pickwick at length, in a kind but somewhat melancholy tone, "it is the best way in which I could reward him for his attachment and fidelity: let it be so, in Heaven's name. It is the fate of a lonely old man, that those about him should form new and different attachments and leave him. I have no right to expect that it should be otherwise with me. No, no," added Mr. Pickwick more cheerfully, "it would be selfish and ungrateful. I ought to be happy to have an opportunity of providing for him so well. I am. Of course I am."

Mr. Pickwick had been so absorbed in these reflections, that a knock at the door was three or four times repeated before he heard it. Hastily seating himself, and calling up his accustomed pleasant looks, he gave the required permission, and Sam Weller entered, followed by his father.

"Glad to see you back again, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. How do you do, Mr. Weller?"

"Wery hearty, thankee sir," replied the widower; "hope I see *you* well, sir."

"Quite, I thank you," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"I wanted to have a little bit o' conwersation with you, sir," said Mr. Weller, "if you could spare me five minits or so, sir."

"Certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Sam, give your father a chair."

"Thankee, Samivel, I've got a cheer here," said Mr. Weller, bringing one forward as he spoke; "uncommon fine day it's been, sir," added the old gentleman, laying his hat on the floor as he sat himself down.

"Remarkably so indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick. "Very seasonable."

"Seasonablest veather I ever see, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller. Here, the old gentleman was seized with a violent fit of coughing, which, being terminated, he nodded his head, and winked, and made several supplicatory and threatening gestures to his son, all of which Sam Weller steadily abstained from seeing.

Mr. Pickwick, perceiving that there was some embarrassment on the old gentleman's part, affected to be engaged in cutting the leaves of a book that lay beside him; and waited patiently until Mr. Weller should arrive at the object of his visit.

"I never see sich a aggerawatin' boy as you are, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, looking indignantly at his son! "never in all my born days."

"What is he doing, Mr. Weller?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He von't begin, sir," rejoined Mr. Weller; "he knows I a'n't ekal to ex-pressin' myself ven there's anythin' partickler to be done, and yet he'll stand and see me a-settin' here takin' up your walable time, and makin' a reg'lar spectacle o' myself, rayther than help me out

vith a syllable. It a'n't fillal conduct, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, wiping his forehead; "wery far from it."

"You said you'd speak," replied Sam; "how should I know you wos done up at the wery beginnin'?"

"You might ha' seen I warn't able to start," rejoined his father; "I'm on the wrong side of the road, and backin' into the palin's, and all manner of unpleasantness, and yet you von't put out a hand to help me. I'm ashamed on you, Samivel."

"The fact is, sir," said Sam, with a slight bow, "the gov'ner's been a-drawin' his money."

"Wery good, Samivel, wery good," said Mr. Weller, nodding his head with a satisfied air, "I didn't mean to speak harsh to you, Sammy. Wery good. That's the vay to begin; come to the p'int at once. Wery good indeed, Samivel."

Mr. Weller nodded his head an extraordinary number of times, in the excess of his gratification, and waited in a listening attitude for Sam to resume his statement.

"You may sit down, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, apprehending that the interview was likely to prove rather longer than he had expected.

Sam bowed again and sat down; his father looking round, he continued:

"The gov'ner, sir, has drawn out five hundred and thirty pound."

"Reduced counsels," interposed Mr. Weller, senior, in an under tone.

"It don't much matter vether it's reduced counsels, or wot not," said Sam; "five hundred and thirty pound is the sum, a'n't it?"

"All right, Samivel," replied Mr. Weller.

"To vich sum he has added for the house and bisness" —

"Lease, good-vill, stock, and fixters," interposed Mr. Weller.

— "As much as makes it," continued Sam, "altogether, eleven hundred and eighty pound."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick, "I am delighted to hear it. I congratulate you, Mr. Weller, on having done so well."

"Vait a minit, sir," said Mr. Weller, raising his hand in a deprecatory manner. "Get on, Samivel."

"This here money," said Sam, with a little hesitation, "he's anxious to put someveres, vere he knows it 'll be safe, and I'm wery anxious too, for if he keeps it, he'll go a-lendin' it to somebody, or inwestin' property in horses, or droppin' his pocket-book down a airy, or makin' an Egyptian mummy of his-self in some vay or another."

"Wery good, Samivel," observed Mr. Weller, in as complacent a manner as if Sam had been passing the highest eulogiums on his prudence and foresight. "Wery good."

"For vich reasons," continued Sam, plucking nervously at the brim of his hat; "for vich reasons he's drawn it out to-day, and come here vith me to say, leastvays to offer, or in other vords to" —

"To say this here," said the elder Mr. Weller, impatiently, "that it a'n't o' no use to me; I'm a-goin' to vork a coach reg'lar, and ha'n't got noveres to keep it in, unless I vos to pay the guard for takin' care on it, or to put it in vun o' the coach-pockets, vich 'ud be a temptation to the insides. If you'll take care on it for me, sir, I shall be wery much obliged to you. P'raps," said Mr. Weller, walking up to Mr. Pickwick and whispering in his

ear, "p'raps it 'll go a little vay towards the expenses o' that 'ere conwiction. All I say is, just you keep it till I ask you for it again." With these words, Mr. Weller placed the pocket-book in Mr. Pickwick's hands, caught up his hat, and ran out of the room with a celerity scarcely to be expected from so corpulent a subject.

"Stop him, Sam!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, earnestly, "Overtake him; bring him back instantly! Mr. Weller — here — come back!"

Sam saw that his master's injunctions were not to be disobeyed; and catching his father by the arm as he was descending the stairs, dragged him back by main force.

"My good friend," said Mr. Pickwick, taking the old man by the hand; "your honest confidence overpowers me."

"I don't see no occasion for nothin' o' the kind, sir," replied Mr. Weller, obstinately.

"I assure you, my good friend, I have more money than I can ever need; far more than a man at my age can ever live to spend," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No man knows how much he can spend, till he tries," observed Mr. Weller.

"Perhaps not," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but as I have no intention of trying any such experiments, I am not likely to come to want. I must beg you to take this back, Mr. Weller."

"Wery well," said Mr. Weller, with a discontented look. "Mark my vords, Sammy, I'll do somethin' desperate vith this here property; somethin' desperate!"

"You'd better not," replied Sam.

Mr. Weller reflected for a short time, and then, buttoning up his coat with great determination, said:

"I'll keep a pike."

"Wot!" exclaimed Sam.

"A pike," rejoined Mr. Weller, through his set teeth; "I'll keep a pike. Say good b'ye to your father, Samivel; I dewote the remainder o' my days to a pike."

This threat was such an awful one, and Mr. Weller besides appearing fully resolved to carry it into execution, seemed so deeply mortified by Mr. Pickwick's refusal, that that gentleman, after a short reflection, said:

"Well, well, Mr. Weller, I will keep the money. I can do more good with it, perhaps, than you can."

"Just the wery thing, to be sure," said Mr. Weller, brightening up; "o' course you can, sir."

"Say no more about it," said Mr. Pickwick, locking the pocket-book in his desk; "I am heartily obliged to you, my good friend. Now sit down again; I want to ask your advice."

The internal laughter occasioned by the triumphant success of his visit, which had convulsed not only Mr. Weller's face, but his arms, legs, and body also, during the locking up of the pocket-book, suddenly gave place to the most dignified gravity as he heard these words.

"Wait outside a few minutes, Sam, will you?" said Mr. Pickwick.

Sam immediately withdrew.

Mr. Weller looked uncommonly wise and very much amazed, when Mr. Pickwick opened the discourse by saying:

"You are not an advocate for matrimony, I think, Mr. Weller?"

Mr. Weller shook his head. He was wholly unable to speak; for vague thoughts of some wicked widow

having been successful in her designs on Mr. Pickwick, choked his utterance.

"Did you happen to see a young girl down-stairs when you came in just now with your son?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes — I see a young gal," replied Mr. Weller, shortly.

"What did you think of her, now? Candidly, Mr. Weller, what did you think of her?"

"I thought she wos wery plump, and vell made," said Mr. Weller, with a critical air.

"So she is," said Mr. Pickwick, "so she is. What did you think of her manners, from what you saw of her?"

"Wery pleasant," rejoined Mr. Weller. "Wery pleasant and conformable."

The precise meaning which Mr. Weller attached to this last-mentioned adjective, did not appear; but, as it was evident from the tone in which he used it that it was a favorable expression, Mr. Pickwick was as well satisfied as if he had been thoroughly enlightened on the subject.

"I take a great interest in her, Mr. Weller," said Mr. Pickwick.

Mr. Weller coughed.

"I mean an interest in her doing well," resumed Mr. Pickwick; "a desire that she may be comfortable and prosperous. You understand?"

"Wery clearly," replied Mr. Weller, who understood nothing yet.

"That young person," said Mr. Pickwick, "is attached to your son."

"To Samivel Veller!" exclaimed the parent.

"Yes," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It's nat'ral," said Mr. Weller, after some consideration, "nat'ral, but rayther alarmin'. Sammy must be careful."

"How do you mean?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Wery careful that he don't say nothin' to her," responded Mr. Weller. "Wery careful that he a'n't led avay, in a innocent moment, to say anythin' as may lead to a conwiction for breach. You're never safe vith 'em, Mr. Pickwick, ven they vunce has designs on you; there's no knowin' vere to have 'em; and vile you're a-considering of it, they have you. I wos married fust, that vay myself, sir, and Sammy was the consekens o' the manoover."

"You give me no great encouragement to conclude what I have to say," observed Mr. Pickwick, "but I had better do so at once. This young person is not only attached to your son, Mr. Weller, but your son is attached to her."

"Vell," said Mr. Weller, "this here's a pretty sort o' thing to come to a father's ears, this is!"

"I have observed them on several occasions," said Mr. Pickwick, making no comment on Mr. Weller's last remark; "and entertain no doubt at all about it. Supposing I were desirous of establishing them comfortably as man and wife in some little business or situation, where they might hope to obtain a decent living, what should you think of it, Mr. Weller?"

At first, Mr. Weller received, with wry faces, a proposition involving the marriage of anybody in whom he took an interest; but, as Mr. Pickwick argued the point with him, and laid great stress on the fact that Mary was not a widow, he gradually became more tractable.

Mr. Pickwick had great influence over him; and he had been much struck with Mary's appearance, having, in fact, bestowed several very unfatherly winks upon her, already. At length he said, that it was not for him to oppose Mr. Pickwick's inclination, and that he would be very happy to yield to his advice; upon which, Mr. Pickwick joyfully took him at his word, and called Sam back into the room.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, clearing his throat, "your father and I have been having some conversation about you."

"About you, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, in a patronizing and impressive voice.

"I am not so blind, Sam, as not to have seen, a long time since, that you entertain something more than a friendly feeling towards Mrs. Winkle's maid," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You hear this, Samivel?" said Mr. Weller in the same judicial form of speech as before.

"I hope, sir," said Sam, addressing his master, "I hope there's no harm in a young man takin' notice of a young 'ooman as is undeniably good-looking and well-conducted."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not by no means," acquiesced Mr. Weller, affably but magisterially.

"So far from thinking there is anything wrong, in conduct so natural," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "it is my wish to assist and promote your wishes in this respect. With this view, I have had a little conversation with your father; and finding that he is of my opinion" —

"The lady not bein' a widder," interposed Mr. Weller in explanation.

"The lady not being a widow," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling. "I wish to free you from the restraint which your present position imposes upon you, and to mark my sense of your fidelity and many excellent qualities, by enabling you to marry this girl at once, and to earn an independent livelihood for yourself and family. I shall be proud, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, whose voice had faltered a little hitherto, but now resumed its customary tone, "proud and happy to make your future prospects in life, my grateful and peculiar care."

There was a profound silence for a short time, and then Sam said, in a low husky sort of voice, but firmly withal:

"I'm very much obliged to you for your goodness, sir, as is only like yourself; but it can't be done."

"Can't be done!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick in astonishment.

"Samivel!" said Mr. Weller, with dignity.

"I say it can't be done," repeated Sam in a louder key. "Wot's to become of you, sir?"

"My good fellow," replied Mr. Pickwick, "the recent changes among my friends will alter my mode of life in future, entirely; besides I am growing older, and want repose and quiet. My rambles, Sam, are over."

"How do I know that 'ere, sir?" argued Sam; "you think so now! S'pose you wos to change your mind, vich is not unlikely, for you've the spirit o' five-and-tventy in you still, what 'ud become on you vithout me? It can't be done, sir, it can't be done."

"Wery good, Samivel, there's a good deal in that," said Mr. Weller, encouragingly.

"I speak after long deliberation, Sam, and with the certainty that I shall keep my word," said Mr. Pickwick,

shaking his head. "New scenes have closed upon me; my rambles are at an end."

"Wery good," rejoined Sam. "Then, that's the wery best reason wy you should alvays have somebody by you as understands you, to keep you up and make you comfortable. If you vant a more polished sort o' feller, vell and good, have him; but vages or no vages, notice or no notice, board or no board, lodgin' or no lodgin', Sam Veller, as you took from the old inn in the Borough, sticks by you, come what come may; and let ev'rythin' and ev'rybody do their wery fiercest, nothin' shall ever perwent it!"

At the close of this declaration, which Sam made with great emotion, the elder Mr. Weller rose from his chair, and forgetting all considerations of time, place, or propriety, waved his hat above his head, and gave three vehement cheers.

"My good fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, when Mr. Weller had sat down again, rather abashed at his own enthusiasm, "you are bound to consider the young woman also."

"I do consider the young 'ooman, sir," said Sam. "I have considered the young 'ooman. I've spoke to her, I've told her how I'm sitivated, she's ready to vait till I'm ready, and I believe she vill. If she don't, she's not the young 'ooman I take her for, and I give her up vith readiness. You've know'd me afore, sir. My mind's made up, and nothin' can ever alter it."

Who could combat this resolution? Not Mr. Pickwick. He derived, at that moment, more pride and luxury of feeling from the disinterested attachment of his humble friends, than ten thousand protestations from the greatest men living, could have awakened in his heart.

While this conversation was passing in Mr. Pickwick's room, a little old gentleman in a suit of snuff-colored clothes, followed by a porter carrying a small portmanteau, presented himself below; and after securing a bed for the night, inquired of the waiter whether one Mrs. Winkle was staying there, to which question the waiter, of course, responded in the affirmative.

"Is she alone?" inquired the little old gentleman.

"I believe she is, sir," replied the waiter; "I can call her own maid, sir, if you" ——

"No, I don't want her," said the old gentleman quickly "Show me to her room without announcing me."

"Eh, sir?" said the waiter.

"Are you deaf?" inquired the little old gentleman.

"No, sir."

"Then listen, if you please. Can you hear me now?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's well. Show me to Mrs. Winkle's room, without announcing me."

As the little old gentleman uttered this command, he slipped five shillings into the waiter's hand, and looked steadily at him.

"Really, sir," said the waiter, "I don't know sir, whether" ——

"Ah! you'll do it, I see," said the little old gentleman. "You had better do it at once. It will save time."

There was something so very cool and collected in the gentleman's manner, that the waiter put the five shillings in his pocket, and led him up-stairs without another word.

"This is the room, is it?" said the gentleman. "You may go."

The waiter complied, wondering much who the gentle-

man could be, and what he wanted; the little old gentleman waiting till he was out of sight, tapped at the door.

"Come in," said Arabella.

"Um, a pretty voice at any rate," murmured the little old gentleman; "but that's nothing." As he said this, he opened the door and walked in. Arabella, who was sitting at work, rose on beholding a stranger — a little confused, but by no means ungracefully so.

"Pray don't rise, ma'am," said the unknown, walking in, and closing the door after him. "Mrs. Winkle, I believe?"

Arabella inclined her head.

"Mrs. Nathaniel Winkle, who married the son of the old man at Birmingham?" said the stranger, eying Arabella with visible curiosity.

Again, Arabella inclined her head, and looked uneasily round, as if uncertain whether to call for assistance.

"I surprise you, I see, ma'am," said the old gentleman.

"Rather, I confess," replied Arabella, wondering more and more.

"I'll take a chair, if you'll allow me, ma'am," said the stranger.

He took one; and drawing a spectacle-case from his pocket, leisurely pulled out a pair of spectacles, which he adjusted on his nose.

"You don't know me, ma'am?" he said, looking so intently at Arabella, that she began to feel alarmed.

"No, sir," she replied, timidly.

"No," said the gentleman, nursing his left leg; "I don't know how you should. You know my name, though, ma'am."

"Do I?" said Arabella, trembling, though she scarcely knew why. "May I ask what it is?"

"Presently, ma'am, presently," said the stranger, not having yet removed his eyes from her countenance. "You have been recently married, ma'am?"

"I have," replied Arabella, in a scarcely audible tone, laying aside her work, and becoming greatly agitated as a thought, that had occurred to her before, struck more forcibly upon her mind.

"Without having represented to your husband the propriety of first consulting his father, on whom he is dependent, I think?" said the stranger.

Arabella applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Without an endeavor, even, to ascertain, by some indirect appeal, what were the old man's sentiments on a point in which he would naturally feel much interested?" said the stranger.

"I cannot deny it, sir," said Arabella.

"And without having sufficient property of your own to afford your husband any permanent assistance in exchange for the worldly advantages which you knew he would have gained if he had married agreeably to his father's wishes?" said the old gentleman. "This is what boys and girls call disinterested affection, till they have boys and girls of their own, and then they see it in a rougher and very different light!"

Arabella's tears flowed fast, as she pleaded in extenuation, that she was young and inexperienced; that her attachment had alone induced her to take the step to which she had resorted; and that she had been deprived of the counsel and guidance of her parents almost from infancy.

"It was wrong," said the old gentleman in a milder

tone, "very wrong. It was foolish, romantic, unbusiness-like."

"It was my fault; all my fault, sir," replied poor Arabella, weeping.

"Nonsense," said the old gentleman, "it was not your fault that he fell in love with you, I suppose. Yes it was, though," said the old gentleman, looking rather slyly at Arabella. "It was your fault. He couldn't help it."

This little compliment, or the little gentleman's odd way of paying it, or his altered manner — so much kinder than it was at first — or all three together, forced a smile from Arabella in the midst of her tears.

"Where's your husband?" inquired the old gentleman, abruptly; stopping a smile which was just coming over his own face.

"I expect him every instant, sir," said Arabella. "I persuaded him to take a walk this morning. He is very low and wretched at not having heard from his father."

"Low is he?" said the old gentleman. "Serve him right!"

"He feels it on my account, I am afraid," said Arabella; "and indeed, sir, I feel it deeply on his. I have been the sole means of bringing him to his present condition."

"Don't mind it on his account, my dear," said the old gentleman. "It serves him right. I am glad of it — actually glad of it, as far as he is concerned."

The words were scarcely out of the old gentleman's lips, when footsteps were heard ascending the stairs, which he and Arabella seemed both to recognize at the same moment. The little gentleman turned pale; and making a strong effort to appear composed, stood up, as Mr. Winkle entered the room.

"Father!" cried Mr. Winkle, recoiling in amazement.

"Yes, sir," replied the little old gentleman. "Well, sir, what have you got to say to me?"

Mr. Winkle remained silent.

"You are ashamed of yourself, I hope, sir," said the old gentleman.

Still Mr. Winkle said nothing.

"Are you ashamed of yourself, sir, or are you not?" inquired the old gentleman.

"No, sir," replied Mr. Winkle, drawing Arabella's arm through his. "I am not ashamed of myself, or of my wife either."

"Upon my word!" cried the old gentleman, ironically.

"I am very sorry to have done anything which has lessened your affection for me, sir," said Mr. Winkle; "but I will say, at the same time, that I have no reason to be ashamed of having this lady for my wife, nor you of having her for a daughter."

"Give me your hand, Nat.," said the old gentleman in an altered voice. "Kiss me, my love; you *are* a very charming little daughter-in-law after all!"

In a few minutes' time, Mr. Winkle went in search of Mr. Pickwick, and returning with that gentleman, presented him to his father, whereupon they shook hands for five minutes incessantly.

"Mr. Pickwick, I thank you most heartily for all your kindness to my son," said old Mr. Winkle, in a bluff, straight-forward way. "I am a hasty fellow, and when I saw you last, I was vexed and taken by surprise. I have judged for myself now, and am more than satisfied. Shall I make any more apologies, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Not one," replied that gentleman. "You have done the only thing wanting to complete my happiness."

Hereupon, there was another shaking of hands for five minutes longer, accompanied by a great number of complimentary speeches, which, besides being complimentary, had the additional and very novel recommendation of being sincere.

Sam had dutifully seen his father to the Belle Sauvage, when, on returning, he encountered the fat boy in the court, who had been charged with the delivery of a note from Emily Wardle.

"I say," said Joe, who was unusually loquacious, "what a pretty girl Mary is, isn't she? I am *so* fond of her, I am!"

Mr. Weller made no verbal remark in reply, but eying the fat boy for a moment, quite transfixed at his presumption, led him by the collar to the corner, and dismissed him with a harmless but ceremonious kick; after which, he walked home, whistling.

CHAPTER LVII.

IN WHICH THE PICKWICK CLUB IS FINALLY DISSOLVED, AND EVERYTHING CONCLUDED TO THE SATISFACTION OF EVERYBODY.

For a whole week after the happy arrival of Mr. Winkle from Birmingham, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller were from home all day long, only returning just in time for dinner, and then wearing an air of mystery and importance quite foreign to their natures. It was evident that very grave and eventful proceedings were on foot; but various surmises were afloat, respecting their precise character. Some (among whom was Mr. Tupman) were disposed to think that Mr. Pickwick contemplated a matrimonial alliance; but this idea the ladies most strenuously repudiated. Others, rather inclined to the belief that he had projected some distant tour, and was at present occupied in effecting the preliminary arrangements; but this again was stoutly denied by Sam himself, who had unequivocally stated, when cross-examined by Mary, that no new journeys were to be undertaken. At length, when the brains of the whole party had been racked, for six long days, by unavailing speculation, it was unanimously resolved that Mr. Pickwick should be called upon to explain his conduct, and to state distinctly why he had thus absented himself from the society of his admiring friends.

With this view, Mr. Wardle invited the full circle to dinner at the Adelphi; and the decanters having been twice sent round, opened the business.

"We are all anxious to know," said the old gentleman, "what we have done to offend you, and to induce you to desert us and devote yourself to these solitary walks."

"Are you?" said Mr. Pickwick. "It is singular enough that I had intended to volunteer a full explanation this very day; so, if you will give me another glass of wine, I will satisfy your curiosity."

The decanters passed from hand to hand with unwonted briskness, and Mr. Pickwick looking round on the faces of his friends, with a cheerful smile proceeded:

"All the changes that have taken place among us," said Mr. Pickwick, "I mean the marriage that *has* taken place, and the marriage that *will* take place, with the changes they involve, rendered it necessary for me to think, soberly and at once, upon my future plans. I determined on retiring to some quiet, pretty neighborhood in the vicinity of London; I saw a house which exactly suited my fancy; I have taken it and furnished it. It is fully prepared for my reception, and I intend entering upon it at once, trusting that I may yet live to spend many quiet years in peaceful retirement: cheered through life by the society of my friends, and followed in death by their affectionate remembrance."

Here Mr. Pickwick paused, and a low murmur ran round the table.

"The house I have taken," said Mr. Pickwick, "is at Dulwich; it has a large garden, and is situated in one of the most pleasant spots near London. It has been fitted up with every attention to substantial comfort;

perhaps to a little elegance besides; but of that you shall judge for yourselves. Sam accompanies me there. I have engaged, on Perker's representation, a housekeeper — a very old one — and such other servants as she thinks I shall require. I propose to consecrate this little retreat, by having a ceremony, in which I take a great interest, performed there. I wish, if my friend Wardle entertain no objection, that his daughter should be married from my new house, on the day I take possession of it. The happiness of young people," said Mr. Pickwick, a little moved, "has ever been the chief pleasure of my life. It will warm my heart to witness the happiness of those friends who are dearest to me, beneath my own roof."

Mr. Pickwick paused again: and Emily and Arabella sobbed audibly.

"I have communicated, both personally and by letter, with the club," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "acquainting them with my intention. During our long absence, it has suffered much from internal dissensions; and the withdrawal of my name, coupled with this and other circumstances, has occasioned its dissolution. The Pickwick Club exists no longer."

"I shall never regret," said Mr. Pickwick in a low voice, "I shall never regret having devoted the greater part of two years to mixing with different varieties and shades of human character: frivolous as my pursuit of novelty may have appeared to many. Nearly the whole of my previous life having been devoted to business and the pursuit of wealth, numerous scenes of which I had no previous conception have dawned upon me — I hope to the enlargement of my mind, and the improvement of my understanding. If I have done but little good, I

trust I have done less harm, and that none of my adventures will be other than a source of amusing and pleasant recollection to me in the decline of life. God bless you all."

With these words, Mr. Pickwick filled and drained a bumper, with a trembling hand; and his eyes moistened as his friends rose with one accord, and pledged him from their hearts.

There were very few preparatory arrangements to be made, for the marriage of Mr. Snodgrass. As he had neither father nor mother, and had been in his minority a ward of Mr. Pickwick's, that gentleman was perfectly well acquainted with his possessions and prospects. His account of both was quite satisfactory to Wardle — as almost any other account would have been; for the good old gentleman was overflowing with hilarity and kindness — and a handsome portion having been bestowed upon Emily, the marriage was fixed to take place on the fourth day from that time: the suddenness of which preparations reduced three dress-makers and a tailor to the extreme verge of insanity.

Getting post-horses to the carriage, old Wardle started off, next day, to bring his mother up to town. Communicating his intelligence to the old lady, with characteristic impetuosity, she instantly fainted away; but being promptly revived, ordered the brocaded silk gown to be packed up forthwith, and proceeded to relate some circumstances of a similar nature attending the marriage of the eldest daughter of Lady Tollimglower, deceased, which occupied three hours in the recital, and were not half finished at last.

Mrs. Trundle had to be informed of all the mighty preparations that were making in London; and being in

a delicate state of health was informed thereof through Mr. Trundle, lest the news should be too much for her; but it was not too much for her, inasmuch as she at once wrote off to Muggleton, to order a new cap and a black satin gown, and moreover avowed her determination of being present at the ceremony. Hereupon, Mr. Trundle called in the doctor, and the doctor said Mrs. Trundle ought to know best how she felt herself, to which Mrs. Trundle replied that she felt herself quite equal to it, and that she had made up her mind to go; upon which the doctor, who was a wise and discreet doctor, and knew what was good for himself as well as for other people, said, that perhaps if Mrs. Trundle stopped at home she might hurt herself more, by fretting, than by going, so perhaps she had better go. And she did go; the doctor with great attention sending in half-a-dozen of medicine, to be drunk upon the road.

In addition to these points of distraction, Wardle was intrusted with two small letters to two small young ladies who were to act as bridesmaids; upon the receipt of which, the two young ladies were driven to despair by having no "things" ready for so important an occasion, and no time to make them in — a circumstance which appeared to afford the two worthy papas of the two small young ladies rather a feeling of satisfaction than otherwise. However, old frocks were trimmed, and new bonnets made, and the young ladies looked as well as could possibly have been expected of them; and as they cried at the subsequent ceremony in the proper places, and trembled at the right times, they acquitted themselves to the admiration of all beholders.

How the two poor relations ever reached London — whether they walked, or got behind coaches, or procured

lifts in wagons, or carried each other by turns — is uncertain, but there they were, before Wardle; and the very first people that knocked at the door of Mr. Pickwick's house, on the bridal morning, were the two poor relations, all smiles and shirt collar.

They were welcomed heartily though, for riches or poverty had no influence on Mr. Pickwick; the new servants were all alacrity and readiness; Sam was in a most unrivalled state of high spirits and excitement; and Mary was glowing with beauty and smart ribbons.

The bridegroom, who had been staying at the house for two or three days previous, sallied forth gallantly to Dulwich church to meet the bride: attended by Mr. Pickwick, Ben Allen, Bob Sawyer, and Mr. Tupman: with Sam Weller outside, having at his button-hole a white favor, the gift of his lady-love, and clad in a new and gorgeous suit of livery invented for the occasion. They were met by the Wardles, and the Winkles, and the bride and bridesmaids, and the Trundles; and the ceremony having been performed, the coaches rattled back to Mr. Pickwick's to breakfast, where little Mr. Perker already awaited them.

Here, all the light clouds of the more solemn part of the proceedings passed away; every face shone forth joyously; and nothing was to be heard but congratulations and commendations. Everything was so beautiful! The lawn in front, the garden behind, the miniature conservatory, the dining-room, the drawing-room, the bedrooms, the smoking-room, and above all the study, with its pictures and easy-chairs, and odd cabinets, and queer tables, and books out of number, with a large cheerful window opening upon a pleasant lawn and commanding a pretty landscape, just dotted here and there

with little houses almost hidden by the trees; and then the curtains, and the carpets, and the chairs, and the sofas! Everything was so beautiful, so compact, so neat, and in such exquisite taste, said everybody, that there really was no deciding what to admire most.

And in the midst of all this, stood Mr. Pickwick: his countenance lighted up with smiles, which the heart of no man, woman, or child, could resist: himself the happiest of the group: shaking hands, over and over again with the same people, and when his own were not so employed, rubbing them with pleasure: turning round in a different direction at every fresh expression of gratification or curiosity, and inspiring everybody with his looks of gladness and delight.

Breakfast is announced. Mr. Pickwick leads the old lady (who has been very eloquent on the subject of Lady Tollimglower), to the top of a long table; Wardle takes the bottom; the friends arrange themselves on either side; Sam takes his station behind his master's chair; the laughter and talking cease; Mr. Pickwick, having said grace, pauses for an instant, and looks round him. As he does so, the tears roll down his cheeks, in the fulness of his joy.

Let us leave our old friend in one of those moments of unmixed happiness, of which, if we seek them, there are ever some, to cheer our transitory existence here. There are dark shadows on the earth, but its lights are stronger in the contrast. Some men, like bats or owls, have better eyes for the darkness than for the light; we, who have no such optical powers, are better pleased to take our last parting look at the visionary companions of many solitary hours, when the brief sunshine of the world is blazing full upon them.

It is the fate of most men who mingle with the world, and attain even the prime of life, to make many real friends, and lose them in the course of nature. It is the fate of all authors or chroniclers to create imaginary friends, and lose them in the course of art. Nor is this the full extent of their misfortunes; for they are required to furnish an account of them besides.

In compliance with this custom — unquestionably a bad one — we subjoin a few biographical words, in relation to the party at Mr. Pickwick's assembled.

Mr. and Mrs. Winkle being fully received into favor by the old gentleman, were, shortly afterwards, installed in a newly built house, not half a mile from Mr. Pickwick's. Mr. Winkle, being engaged in the city as agent or town correspondent of his father, exchanged his old costume for the ordinary dress of Englishmen, and presented all the external appearance of a civilized Christian ever afterwards.

Mr. and Mrs. Snodgrass settled at Dingley Dell, where they purchased and cultivated a small farm, more for occupation than profit. Mr. Snodgrass, being occasionally abstracted and melancholy, is to this day reputed a great poet among his friends and acquaintance, although we do not find that he has ever written anything to encourage the belief. There are many celebrated characters, literary, philosophical, and otherwise, who hold a high reputation on a similar tenure.

Mr. Tupman, when his friends married and Mr. Pickwick settled, took lodgings at Richmond, where he has ever since resided. He walks constantly on the Terrace during the summer months, with a youthful and jaunty air, which has rendered him the admiration of the numer-

ous elderly ladies of single condition, who reside in the vicinity. He has never proposed again.

Mr. Bob Sawyer, having previously passed through the Gazette, passed over to Bengal, accompanied by Mr. Benjamin Allen: both gentlemen having received surgical appointments from the East India Company. They each had the yellow fever fourteen times, and then resolved to try a little abstinence; since which period, they have been doing well.

Mrs. Bardell let lodgings to many conversable single gentlemen, with great profit, but never brought any more actions for breach of promise of marriage. Her attorneys, Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, continue in business, from which they realize a large income, and in which they are universally considered among the sharpest of the sharp.

Sam Weller kept his word, and remained unmarried, for two years. The old housekeeper dying at the end of that time, Mr. Pickwick promoted Mary to the situation, on condition of her marrying Mr. Weller at once, which she did without a murmur. From the circumstance of two sturdy little boys having been repeatedly seen at the gate of the back garden, there is reason to suppose that Sam has some family.

The elder Mr. Weller drove a coach for twelve months, but being afflicted with the gout, was compelled to retire. The contents of the pocket-book had been so well invested for him, however, by Mr. Pickwick, that he had a handsome independence to retire on, upon which he still lives, at an excellent public-house near Shooter's Hill, where he is quite reverenced as an oracle: boasting very much of his intimacy with Mr. Pickwick, and retaining a most unconquerable aversion to widows.

Mr. Pickwick himself continued to reside in his new house, employing his leisure hours in arranging the memoranda which he afterwards presented to the secretary of the once famous club, or in hearing Sam Weller read aloud, with such remarks as suggested themselves to his mind, which never failed to afford Mr. Pickwick great amusement. He was much troubled, at first, by the numerous applications which were made to him by Mr. Snodgrass, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Trundle, to act as godfather to their offspring, but he has become used to it now, and officiates as a matter of course. He never had occasion to regret his bounty to Mr. Jingle; for both that person and Job Trotter became, in time, worthy members of society, although they have always steadily objected to return to the scenes of their old haunts and temptations. Mr. Pickwick is somewhat infirm now; but he retains all his former juvenility of spirit, and may still be frequently seen, contemplating the pictures in the Dulwich Gallery, or enjoying a walk about the pleasant neighborhood on a fine day. He is known by all the poor people about, who never fail to take their hats off, as he passes, with great respect; the children idolize him; and so indeed does the whole neighborhood. Every year, he repairs to a large family merry-making at Mr. Wardle's; on this, as on all other occasions, he is invariably attended by the faithful Sam, between whom and his master there exists a steady and reciprocal attachment, which nothing but death will terminate.

END OF VOL. IV.

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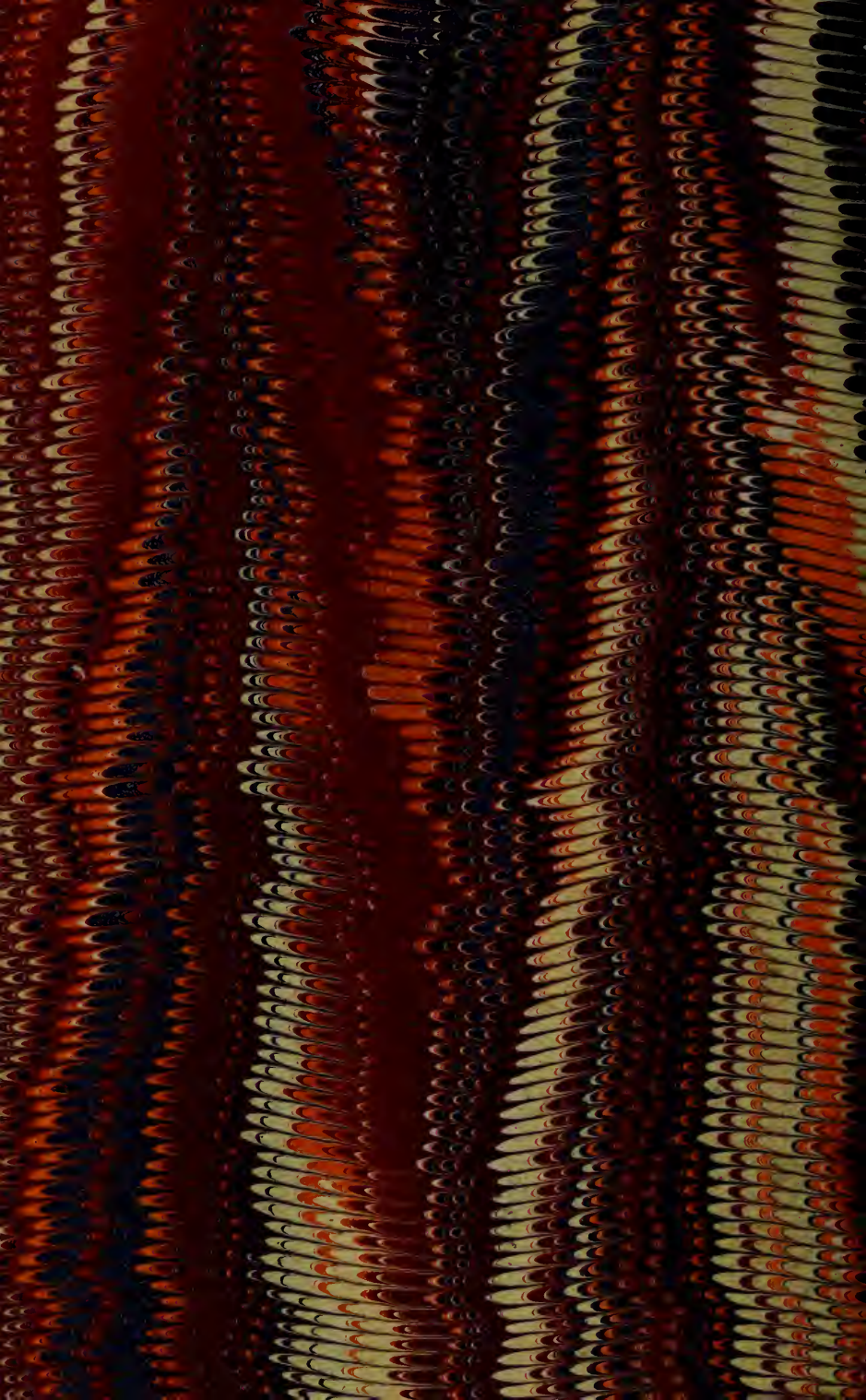

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